



enrichment

Enriching and equipping Spirit-filled ministers

Spring 2008

Renewing the Mission:
**REACHING OUR
COMMUNITY**

ED STETZER

The Future of the Church and Its Mission 36

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Reaching Our Community

Why More About Evangelism?

The previous issue of *EJ* considered Christ's mandate to disciple all believers. The church needs a strong discipleship plan *before* it launches an all out effort to reach its community. Too often the church has effectively reached into its community only to see little long-term results in church growth. This may be the result of a church spending more energy and effort on evangelism than on discipleship. It takes evangelism *and* discipleship to grow a healthy church.

Church Growth 101

How do you grow a church? You add more people. I am sure you already knew that. Yet, it is one of the greatest struggles for most churches. How do you reach your community, add new people to your congregation, disciple them, and sustain a healthy, growing church?

For nearly 20 years of my pastoral ministry my vision statement was "Reach, Win, Train, and Send." It is a simple statement, but it worked for us.

Each church needs to arrive at its own vision and mission statements, but these statements need to include specific elements concerning reaching, winning, training, and sending people back into their communities to reach others.

As a church, we measured our services, events, and activities against this matrix. We planned some events specifically toward reaching and winning and other events for training and sending. For example, we might plan a kid's crusade to be 30 percent for reaching the kids/families of our community, 30 percent for winning them to Jesus, 20 percent for training/discipling them, and 20 percent for sending them back into their environment to reach others.

Intentionality Versus Priority

Reaching, winning, training, and sending are more about the church's intentionality than priority. Priority says we must complete one goal before the other. While personal development must be in sequence, the efforts of the church must be intentional and continual in reaching, winning, training, and sending.

Reaching

Jesus mandated the church to reach its community. In the past, much of the church's efforts were concentrated on how to get people to come from the community into the church. The

church today must be more intentional in how it takes the presence and power of Jesus *into* the community. The church is where we gather after having engaged and connected with people outside the church building.

Remember, the church and its services, events, and activities may not be irrelevant, they just may not be what attracts pre-believers to Christ. Once the church figures out how to connect with people in the community, it needs to become the meeting place where pre-believers find Christ, are nurtured in their spiritual walk, and are sent out to connect with other pre-believers.

Winning

Winning is facilitating the opportunity for Jesus to transform people from their sinful states into a forgiven and cleansed condition. Although we cannot *save* the unbeliever, we can help them to willfully relinquish their sinful nature and allow Jesus to be their Savior and Lord.

Training

While winning is more often an event, training is intentionally instructing people in basic Bible principles and Christlike living. Transformation is a miraculous event, and training includes miraculous spiritual maturity and growth.

Sending

Sending is intentionally investing believers back into their environment to reach others. The church then wins, trains, and sends these new believers. This method results in multiplication rather than just addition to the church.

This may not be the exact model for your church, but your vision and mission statements need to include the biblical mandates to reach people, bring them to Jesus, disciple them, and send them out into the community.

Form Follows Function

As pastor, you need a plan that facilitates the function or missional purpose of your church. You cannot adopt someone else's plan and expect it to fit your circumstances. You need to be intentional in your missional focus and then carefully select a plan that reaches your objectives.

This issue of *Enrichment* address reaching your community. We hope the Holy Spirit will use this issue to reignite the fire of evangelism in your heart. 🙏



GARY R. ALLEN, D.Min., is executive editor of *Enrichment* journal and director of the Ministerial Enrichment Office, Springfield, Missouri.

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ENRICHMENT (ISSN 1082-1791) is published quarterly (January, April, July, October), ©2008 by The General Council of the Assemblies of God, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, Missouri 65802. Assemblies of God ministers may reproduce nonbyline material from *Enrichment* in church publications, giving credit to the journal. Except for brief quotations, signed articles may not be reprinted without permission of the authors. Subscription rates: USA - 1 year \$24; 2 years \$42. Outside USA add \$30 per year. Subscriptions: All subscription correspondence, including change of address, should be sent to *Enrichment*, Customer Services, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802, phone 1-800-641-4310. Periodical postage paid at Springfield, Missouri, and at additional mailing offices. Printed in the USA. **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Enrichment, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802.**



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Expanding The Mission:

REACHING OUR WORLD

In this mega World Missions edition, you will read challenging and informative articles by great missions leaders and pastors such as: Omar Beiler, L. John Bueno, Randy Hurst, E. Scott Martin, Randall Ross, Jean-Baptiste Sawadogo, Randy Valimont, Brad Walz, and others.

Jesus was clear when He instructed the disciples to "proclaim the gospel to all nations." Matthew tells us it was a command. Jesus went to the villages bringing a message of hope to lost people who needed forgiveness. He set the example as a shepherd searching for one sheep lost in the darkness.

Today, it is not difficult to recognize the lostness of humanity in every culture of the world. Evangelism is a response to the lostness of mankind that comes from the heart of the Father. Until every village, language, and people group has received the gospel, the work of the church is not complete.

In this mega World Missions

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WEB SITE:

www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org



Member of Evangelical Press Association



Member of International Pentecostal Press Association

- Use of the masculine pronoun for pastor is used throughout this issue and refers to both genders.

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WHAT IN THE WORLD

Beware of the

SERPENT'S BITE

While 53-year-old Danny Anderson was feeding his horses last summer, he encountered a 5-foot-long rattlesnake on his property in central Washington State. Using an irrigation pipe, Anderson and his son pinned the snake and cut off its head with a shovel. After a few more blows with the pipe, Anderson left the snake's head under his pickup truck.

"When I reached down to pick up the head, it raised around and did a back flip almost, and bit my finger,"

Anderson said. "I had to shake my hand real hard to get it to let loose."

Convinced a doctor needed to examine the bite, Anderson went to Prosser Memorial Hospital. When he arrived, his tongue had swollen and the venom was spreading. An ambulance then took Anderson to another hospital 30 miles away to receive the needed lifesaving treatment.

Mike Livingston, a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist, said he had never heard of a decapitated snake biting anyone before, but suggested that a reflex caused it.

GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS, Mercer Island, Washington

In Genesis 3 God makes it clear that the woman's offspring will one day defeat the serpent (representing Satan and all forces of evil in our world). But there will be a cost. While the woman's offspring will fatally wound the snake, the serpent will attack the One who inflicts the wound in the process. "So the Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel'" (Genesis 3:14,15).

After the people had unjustly tortured and nailed Him to a cross,

Jesus cried out, in His pain, that He had fully paid the price for our salvation. At long last, Jesus had made atonement for the sin of the first couple. In addition, Christ's sacrifice covered all sin set in motion by that first transgression.

Jesus dealt Satan a decisive blow. He rendered the serpent helpless, and He defeated death. Nevertheless, for 2,000 years since Jesus' death and resurrection, we still observe Satan's influence — people fall victim to temptation. The remains of those we love are placed in coffins 7 feet long and buried 6 feet deep.

Much like the rattlesnake head that bit Danny Anderson, the serpent continues to strike even though he is doomed. But his poisonous bite will be short-lived. ☪

CHURCH & COMMUNITY

Community Targeting — Discovering Key Relationships

Communities of believers — new or established — need to be intentional about their visibility and presence in the community. They must discern and meet the needs of the people in the particular location the church serves.

How do you create name recognition for your church? How do you create credibility in your community? One way is to establish relationships with people and organizations in your area. These can help you build meaningful alliances between your church and community.

Http://www.newchurches.com has identified a five-step

process that churches can use to identify strategic opportunities for community understanding.

1. Select a target area by listing the zip codes that encompass your relationships.

2. Obtain nonresidential lists for creating a database that includes all business and nonprofit organizations in these zip codes.

3. Select key groups by sorting and prioritizing big businesses, nonprofit organizations, schools, home and civic organizations, news media, and community-minded organizations.

4. Prioritize and narrow the target by identifying key relationships you wish to establish.

5. Pursue relationships by building first-name relationships with key leaders in the community.

Your efforts to understand your community must go beyond knowing who lives in your area to understanding what the people care about and what motivates them. What matters to the people to whom you are attempting to introduce Jesus? ☪

BYRON D. KLAUS, D.Min., president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri



**I Used To Attend
FIRST CHURCH**

CURRENT BELIEFS

**CURRENT BELIEFS
ABOUT GOD
AMONG THE
FORMERLY CHURCHED**

Christian but not devout	42%
Spiritual but not religious	24%
Devout Christian	19%
Believe in God but not Christianity	10%
Uncertain about God	5%
Don't believe in God	1%

SOURCE: www.lifewayresearch.com



CHURCH PLANTING

**How Many
Church Plants
Really Survive
— and Why?**

Statistics randomly and regularly quoted have led many to believe that 80 percent of church plants fail in the first year. A recent study by the Center for Missional Research, however, showed considerably more favorable results.

Twelve denominations and networks participated in the study with over 1,000 church plants' status of existence determined. With more than 500 completed interviews, the study reveals that 99 percent of church plants survive the first year, 92 percent the second year, 81 percent the third year, and 68 percent the fourth year (see graph).

Yet, that tells only a part of the story. We wanted to learn not only how many survived, but also why. What makes

the difference between those that survive and those that do not? When more than 100 factors were analyzed, the following four categories proved to be the best predictors for survivability over 4 years.

Church Plant Expectations

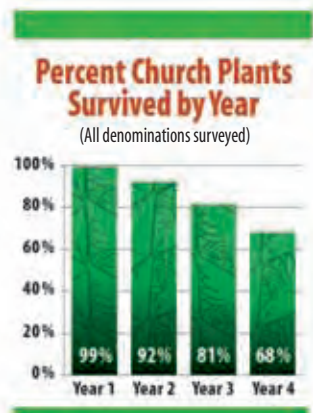
We found that realistic expectations were a significant determining factor of success. When the church-planter's expectations meet the reality of the church planting experience, the chance of survivability increases by over 400 percent.

Church Member Leadership Development

If the church planter provides leadership development training for new church members, the odds of survivability increase by over 250 percent.

Church Planter Peer Group

Those who try to plant a church without the support and counsel of others have greater risk and less chance of survivability.



Stewardship Plan

Church plants that have a proactive stewardship development plan enable the church to become financially self-sufficient. They also increase the odds of survivability by over 178 percent.

Conclusion

If you are planting or considering planting a church, you can increase your probability of survival dramatically by giving attention to these factors. And do not be discouraged when you hear how many church plants fail. There are a lot more that survive. 🌱

SOURCE: Ed Stetzer and Phillip Connor, "Study Shows 68 Percent Survivability Rate for Church Plants," Center for Missional Research, North American Mission Board, SBC, <http://www.namb.net/site/apps/nl/content2.asp?c=9qKILU0zEpH&b=2027651&ct=3656793>

STRATEGIC TRENDS

Photos.com

15 INNOVATIONS THE CHURCH SHOULD EMBRACE NOW!

Innovators are trend spotters and trendsetters. They refuse to do ministry the way it has always been done. Innovators

create the future. They do not do ministry out of memory. They do ministry out of imagination.

Several *Isaachar* leaders were asked to give us their views on what innovations the church should be immersed in. Here are their responses.

PODCASTING — Circuit Riding at the Speed of Light

In addition to your weekly messages, try doing interviews with

church neighbors, the mayor, volunteers, and staff introductions.

BLOGGING — Digital Discipleship

Do not blog for an audience; blog for you. The more you write about what is on your head and heart, the more people will respond.

VIDEO TECHNOLOGIES — Postmodern Stained Glass

The medieval church used stained glass to tell the gospel story in pictures. Use video to tell the gospel story in moving pictures.

VIRAL VIDEO — Get Contagious Quickly

Use <http://www.YouTube.com> to spread the love. Use it creatively for things like behind-the-scenes sermon prep or church staff meetings.

MULTIPURPOSE CHURCH BUILDINGS — Doing Ministry in the Marketplace

Jesus hung out at wells. Coffeehouses are postmodern wells. Instead of asking

people to come to them, the church is going to the people.

MULTISITE CHURCHES — One Church, Multiple Locations

Once thought to be a mere fad, satellite campuses are here to stay.

WEB SITE — Your Church Portal

Guests can get as much information on your church as they want. And they can do it from the comfortable confines of their computer.

E-MAIL — Word of Mouse

Churches need to avoid spam at all costs, but an e-letter is an easy and affordable way to keep the church connected.

BRANDING — the Greatest Message Deserves the Greatest Marketing

Branding has become the marketing rage, and there is a reason. The opposite of brand is bland.

SOCIAL NETWORKING — Church as a Tag-team Sport

Create a MySpace page and build an online congregation.

GET A [SECOND] LIFE! — "Go Into All the [Virtual] Nations"

Check out LifeChurch. tv's campus at <http://www.SecondLife.com>

(an Internet-based virtual world). It may be more real world than this world.

GET JOOST — the Magic of Television Meets the Power of the Internet

The guys behind Kazaa and Skype are shaking it up again with Joost (<http://www.Joost.com>). Imagine watching your service (or other content) online and chatting with viewers at the same time on the same screen.


TEXT MESSAGE — Get Instant Feedback

Instant audience polls. Text to vote during the service for immediate results posted live on the sidescreens. Or text to donate to a cause, building campaign, etc.

RSS — the Feeds That Matter Most

Use RSS feeds to get your info fed fast (weekly bulletin, small group announcements, daily devotionals, and blog entries).

LIVE! MISSIONARIES — Bridging the Geographic Distance

Link up around the world with missionaries your church sends and/or supports. 

CURRENT BELIEFS

Is "TULIP" Blooming in the SBC?

Conversations on Calvinism within the Southern Baptist Convention have brought renewed interest to the 400-year-old theological system.

Proponents of Calvinism, or Reformed theology, view it as a healthy return to early Southern Baptist heritage. Others see Calvinism as a negative trend and fear it is threatening to take over the SBC.

Surveying 413 pastors, LifeWay Research asked Southern Baptist pastors to indicate their position concerning the following question: "Do you consider yourself a five-point Calvinist?"

No	85%
Yes	10%
Don't Know	4%
No Response	1%

The Five Points of Calvinism

- T**otal Depravity
- U**nconditional Election
- L**imited Atonement
- I**rresistible Grace
- P**erseverance of the Saints

SOURCE: LifeWay Research

SOURCE: Willow Magazine, Issue 3, 2007. <http://www.willowcreek.com/wcanews/story.asp?id=WN07132007>



23 TRANSITIONS

for Working With Twentysomethings in the 21st Century

Designpics

The Twentysomething generation is no longer defined by careers or relationships; they are seeking something more from God, others, and ultimately themselves. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that there are 39 million Twentysomethings in the United States alone. Take a minute to discover the new challenges and opportunities for this growing generation.

1. From *representation to participation.*
2. From *critique and pick-apart to celebrate and pick-up.*
3. From *pyramid to pancake, from ladder to Web, from machine to organic garden.*
4. From *institutional Christianity to missional Christianity.*
5. From *printed page to screen, linear to concurrent.*
6. From *in-rows to in-the-round.*
7. From *eye to ear, structure to rhythm, seeing to hearing.*
8. From *control to out of control.*
9. From *authority structures to relational structures.*
10. From *excellence to authenticity, performance to realness.*
11. From *theology of giving to theology of receiving.*
12. From *"Does it make sense?" to "Was it a good experience?"*
13. From *hi-fi stereo to surround sound* spiritually.
14. From *planning to preparedness and prophesying your way forward.*
15. From *church growth to church health.*
16. From *illustration to animation.*
17. From *denomination to my tribe.*
18. From *standing committees to moving teams.*
19. From *mass to demassed structures* (for example, *congregational to cellular*).
20. From *think big and simple to think small and complex.*
21. From *boundary living to frontier/border living.*
22. From *Christendom culture to pre-Christian mission fields.*
23. From *pastoral care to ministry development.* ☺

TOM CHEYNEY, strategic resourcing manager, Church Planting Group.
Visit <http://www.churchplantingvillage.net>

Photos.com



Generation Z?

I had never heard of Generation Z despite the fact I have spent most of the last decade following generational trends. It turned out to be a sham — the brain-child of the gurus at <http://www.trendwatching.com>,

a normally reputable source for marketing trends. They sent out a news brief touting the latest attempts to influence children born after April 1, 2006. They cited a study by a Swiss company (unnamed, of course) that had confirmed a 77 percent brand identity rating for children exposed in utero to jingles, tunes, and spoken messages. They even created a Facebook-like Web site (<http://www.foops.be/>) for these babies and their parents, reporting participation by more than 12,000 users.

When trendwatching.com first released this information, I

proceeded to write this article about the power of brand marketing. Later I learned that the people of trendwatching.com had hoodwinked me. A little embarrassed, but having learned my lesson, I am nevertheless convinced that branding impressions on the minds of our children have incredible power.

So, if you aren't *branding* your ministry, here are two ideas to think about:

Be Kid-friendly

Children are the shortest distance between the two points of the families in your community and your church. If you are not kid-friendly, you are neither serving nor reaching your community.

Keep It Simple

Embed the gospel in young minds. They need to hear and see as often as they can that "Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so." ☺

RANDY WALLS, D.Min., director of continuing education, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Aptitudes for Spirit-led Congregations

The discussion of the Church elicits many opinions and energetic discussions. Surprisingly, beyond the numerous resources about how to do church is little information concerning the substance of the church, particularly information focused on local

church contexts. The *why* and *what* of the church is missing in our 21st-century rhetoric.

Author Craig Van Gelder provides intriguing observations to fill this void.¹ He says the Spirit-created missionary nature of the church provides any congregation with certain aptitudes that need to be cultivated so Spirit-led ministry can be realized. Among these

aptitudes, Van Gelder says Spirit-led congregations:

- **Read a context** that includes demographics, but must be even more attuned to faith and discernment by asking, *What is God doing in this context?* and *What does God want to do?*
- **Anticipate clarifying insights into the gospel.**

Not only will God give new insights for a particular context, but He will also reveal those insights so people in that context can understand them. The insight may be new, but it will be understandable.

- **Anticipate reciprocity.** Like Peter's encounter with the house of Cornelius in Acts 10, we need to expect that our ministry with new target groups will produce people who desire to partner with us in further ministry.
 - **Understand that ministry is always connected to context** — the patterns and shapes of the location in which that ministry is being done.
 - **Acknowledge the provisional nature of any organizational structure** developed to carry out ministry and facilitate congregational life.
- Every congregation is responsible to share the gospel through its words and actions. To be *good news* the gospel must make sense to those who are hearing it. If Jesus was the Word made flesh, it is reasonable that the church strive to make the gospel understandable, knowable, and accessible. ☺
- BYRON D. KLAUS, D.Min.**, president, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri

DesignPics

UTHTRAX

BETWEEN THE ALTAR AND THE DOOR

Mark Hall is a youth pastor and the lead singer/songwriter of the multiplatinum band, *Casting Crowns*. He recently ventured into the online world of MySpace and Facebook on a mission. He listened to his students communicate openly about faith, parents, truth, and life. Hall's experience turned an entire album into a message to youth living between *The Altar and the Door*.

Hall says that *acceptance* in any community is key. Some believe a teen assumes a certain identity because of choice. For example, a teen becomes a Goth because he likes black.
But Hall

disagrees: "They end up with whoever finds a seat for them at lunch."

If your goal is to introduce teens to Christ (the altar), then you need to ask yourself: *What do they first experience when they visit our youth church (the door)?*

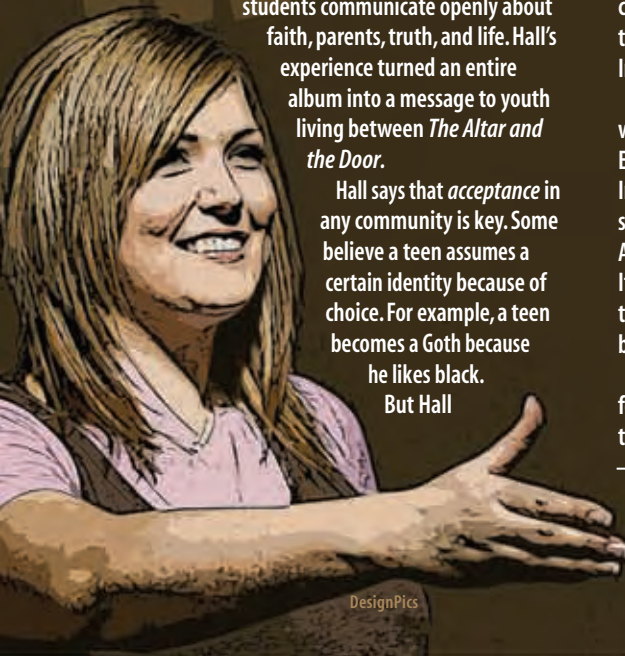
Does anyone greet the teen? Where will he sit once he walks through the door? Is the welcome genuine?

A teen will rarely force himself into a circle of friends who might or might not accept him. The chance of rejection is too high. So what should the church do? One option is to create a First Impressions Team.

Choose adults and teens carefully. Include those who have a heart for evangelism and hospitality. Educate your team about friendship as a ministry. Invite teens with varied interests and personal styles to join to reach a greater number of students. Ask the team to invite visitors to sit with them. If there is an upcoming event, provide materials so the team can help visitors to feel included and to become more involved if they are interested.

A First Impressions Team can help new students feel at home quicker, and hopefully encourage them to join your youth church community. ☺

T. SUZANNE ELLER is an author and youth sponsor. E-mail her at tseller@daretobelieve.org. See real teens sharing real life stories at <http://www.daretobelieve.org>



DesignPics

THE HER BEHIND THE HYMN

WHOSE DESIRE? MINE OR HIS?



Photos.com

Lillian Klein loved only one thing more than music — her Lord. Growing up in a small town outside of Spokane, Washington, she became a gifted pianist. She could play equally well by notes or by ear. Lillian completed her formal education and took a job as supervisor of music in the Spokane school district.

On weekends Lillian accompanied congregational singing at her church. Finding joy while using her gift for the Lord, she wondered what He had in mind for her life. She had no desire to marry a minister or speak to large

groups of people. She hoped the Lord would honor her wishes.

As the Great Depression was sweeping the nation, revival fires were sweeping the West Coast. A young Foursquare evangelist from Los Angeles named Luther Plankenhorn came to Spokane to hold tent meetings. When Lillian accompanied the singing, she had no idea the bachelor evangelist would discover she had the qualities he was looking for in a wife. Lillian surrendered her limitations on marriage to the Lord and promised a lifetime of love to Luther. Since

he was a protégé of Aimee Semple McPherson, 5,000 people attended the wedding held at Angelus Temple with McPherson officiating.

As World War II was ending, Lillian and Luther focused their energies on raising their young family and pastoring a growing church in Walla Walla, Washington. One Sunday night as Luther preached, he said something that deeply affected Lillian, “My greatest desire in life is to be like Jesus.” Lillian wrote these words: “My desire, to be like Jesus. My desire, to be like Him.”

According to Lillian’s daughter Marilyn, “My mother always told me the rest of the words just flowed.” Before Luther completed his sermon, Lillian had written a melody line for the lyrics. Within a few weeks the congregation of Plankenhorn’s church had sung the chorus.

Several months later, Lillian received an invitation to serve as guest speaker

at a women’s conference. Once again the Lord was asking her to surrender her desire to avoid the spotlight.



Plankenhorn

Heading the message of the lyrics she had written, she chose to be like Jesus who obeyed His Father’s direction. She accepted the invitation.

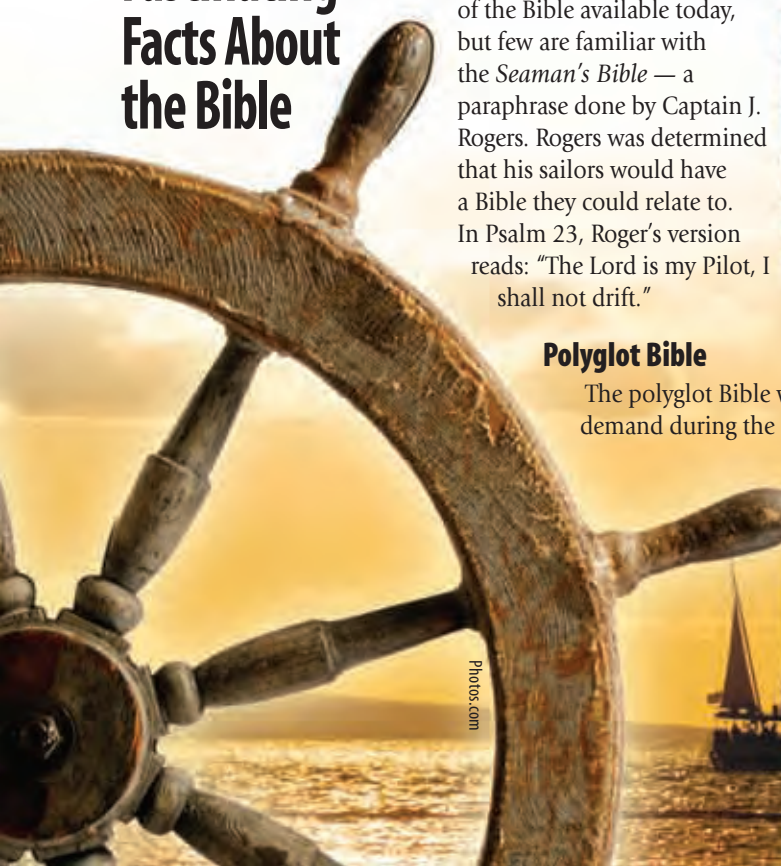
When Lillian discovered the conference theme was The Surrendered Life, she mimeographed her chorus to introduce as a theme song. Attendees took the chorus back to their churches, and it began to circulate without Lillian’s knowledge. Churches large and small have been singing it ever since.

“My desire, to be like Jesus.
My desire, to be like Him.
His Spirit fill me,
His love o’erwhelm me.
In deed and word,
To be like Him.”

GREG ASIMAKOPOULOS, Mercer Island, Washington

DID YOU KNOW?

Fascinating Facts About the Bible



Seaman’s Bible

Most people are aware of the many diverse translations of the Bible available today, but few are familiar with the *Seaman’s Bible* — a paraphrase done by Captain J. Rogers. Rogers was determined that his sailors would have a Bible they could relate to. In Psalm 23, Roger’s version reads: “The Lord is my Pilot, I shall not drift.”



17th centuries by those who could read and afford to own one. A polyglot Bible contains translations of the Old and New Testament texts in several languages, including the original, presented in parallel columns.

The earliest polyglot Bible is the *Complutensian*. Done between 1514 and 1517, a team of scholars compiled

Polyglot Bible

The polyglot Bible was in much demand during the 16th and

the Bible under the direction of Francisco Jimenez de Cisneros, the archbishop of Toledo. A page from the Book of Exodus gives the Hebrew, Latin, and Greek versions in three columns. Below those are an Aramaic paraphrase and a Latin translation.

A polyglot Bible eased the comparison of biblical texts so readers could reach a better understanding of the origins, language, and meaning of the Scriptures.

VICTOR PARACHIN, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Photos.com

Atlanta Dream Center and International Church: Changing Its Community by

Loving the Unlovable

BY JANET WALKER



Paul Palmer, pastor of Atlanta Dream Center and International Church in Atlanta, Georgia, knows what it is like to be homeless. When he met Christ 28 years ago, he was living on the streets of California. He was separated from his wife, Patty, and their two sons, and suffering from drug addiction.

"Someone loved me for who I was, where I was, even when I was unlovable," Palmer says, and that love pointed him to God.

Today, Palmer is back on the streets as Pastor Paul (as he is warmly known in inner-city Atlanta). Each week he oversees community outreaches that demonstrate the love of Christ to the homeless, drug addicts, single parents, and neglected children.

The Palmers came to Atlanta in 2003 believing that God was leading them to start a Dream Center.

"We didn't know exactly where to locate, so we walked the streets at night and prayed," Palmer says. "We felt God's tugging here in the Old Fourth Ward, an area of about 10 to 12 square miles."

This neighborhood was overtaken by poverty in the 1960s and became known as the city's most dangerous, crime-ridden area, where drug dealers sold \$1 million of

crack cocaine a week.

The Atlanta Dream Center has had a dramatic impact on the people and the community. People's hopes and dreams are being restored. The crime rate is lower and neighborhoods are safer.

"At the International Church, we minister weekly to a congregation of about 200," Palmer says, "while our congregation on the streets numbers about 2,000."

Serving with the Palmers are four of their sons and their families, several staff members, about 40 Master's Commission workers, and many volunteers.

Adopt-a-Block is one of the Dream Center's most effective means of loving people and seeing them turn to Christ. Every Saturday morning the Palmers and as many as 60 team leaders and volunteers knock on nearly 400 doors. Each team leader is assigned to a block and takes three to six volunteers to visit homes. They continue to visit their block week after week, meeting needs and building relationships.

"We can't meet every need," Palmer says, "but whatever we tell people we will do, we follow through on. They learn to trust us, and that's how we build relationships."

Deanna (23), a single mother, was pregnant


with her second child when an Adopt-a-Block team visited her housing project, offering help and friendship. She eagerly accepted Christ, and now she and her children walk through a drug-infested neighborhood to attend church twice a week. Deanna testified at church, "I have hope now."

Metro Kidz Atlanta, the Dream Center's after-school program, targets inner-city children and youth, ages 4 to 14, and tutors high-risk students. Hot meals and snacks are provided. Metro Kidz teams also visit housing projects, presenting children with a positive Christian message.

Dee (11), who was failing in school, was tutored at Metro Kidz. His grades improved, and his confidence increased. "One of our Adopt-a-Block pastors made the initial contact with Dee in a housing project and took him under his wing," Palmer says. Dee, rescued from a toilet after his mother delivered and left him there, has never known his father.

On *Compassion Night*, teams minister to the homeless. Team members barbecue hot dogs, set up tables of free clothing, and offer contests and prizes, songs and skits, and the love of Christ. Teams set up *Block Parties* in a park, on a street corner, or any place where people gather. *The Porch Ministry* gives youth a place to come to 24 hours a day for fellowship, help, or counseling.

Atlanta Dream Center is also a place of ministry training. Last year, more than 200 high school and college students attended community service training at the Dream Center's Urban School of Ministry. Two intensive, 10-month training programs are ongoing for Master's Commission students, who receive at least 200 hours of training in work ethics and community awareness, plus participate in an overseas missions experience.

"We're enthusiastic about what God is doing here in Atlanta," Palmer says, "and when people see results, they are eager to get involved." 



JANET WALKER is assistant editor of the *World Missions Edition of Today's Pentecostal Evangel* in Springfield, Missouri.



The Making of a Superintendent

The journey of an insecure, socially awkward, freckled-faced, 10-year-old pastor's kid to a competent and anointed Spirit-filled leader, and now head of one of the largest Pentecostal bodies in the United States, is a remarkable story that brings together the freshness of life experience with a generous portion of God's grace and blessing.

George O. Wood assumed the headship of the Assemblies of God October 8, 2007. *Enrichment journal* visited with the new superintendent to get a close up, intimate look at the spiritual journey that took him from relative obscurity in his early years of ministry to the epicenter of Pentecostalism. This inside look at the making of a superintendent will both inspire and encourage you in your ministry calling.

To read this interview in its entirety, visit <http://www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org>. Click on current issue and look for "Ask the Superintendent."

Describe the influence your parents had on your personal and spiritual formation.

WOOD: My mother, as a single 26-year-old

missionary, went with her sister, Ruth, to northwest China and Tibet in 1924. After my mother served nearly 8 years of her first term, she came home and met Dad, who was itinerating to go on his first missionary term while she was itinerating for her second term. They continued their courtship on the boat from the United States to Shanghai, and married in Shanghai, November 14, 1932. Mom was 34; Dad was 24. They were unlike in many ways, but they had a great commitment to do the work of the Lord.

I learned a great deal from my mother. She was a great woman. I never heard her raise her voice or say an unkind word. She spent 2 hours every morning praying and reading her Bible.

My dad worked hard for the Lord. When China closed to missionaries, he and Mom came home. He never felt called to another foreign mission field. He pioneered three churches; two are still in existence today. He pastored smaller churches, and many of them were troubled churches. When he was not pastoring, he did evangelism. I have been with him in some very hard places.

My parents never quit. They taught me about faithfulness and hard work. They instilled in me a good work ethic.

My dad valued education, even though he had no formal education beyond fifth grade. He did study a year at Beulah Bible School in New Jersey, and he also earned some degrees through correspondence courses. Wherever we lived his diplomas were prominently displayed. His sermons were always organized, and he preached from notes, which in those days was regarded as not spiritual.

How did the small-church environment and church-planting efforts of your parents shape your ministry?

WOOD: My parents' efforts have given me an appreciation for people who pastor smaller churches. I know what it is like to struggle because I watched my parents struggle.

Smaller churches today are somewhat like the neighborhood grocery store when Wal-Mart comes to town. Smaller churches have to compete with larger churches that offer a full-service ministry to people. This is not an easy assignment.

With one-third of Assemblies of God churches under 50, and one-third between 50 and 100, we have many unsung heroes who are faithfully doing the Lord's work.

My mother would say, "Georgie, when we

“
‘Love God and love people.’
If you do these two things,
you will not go too far astray.”

stand before God, He will not ask us if we have been successful, but if we have been faithful.”

The largest church my parents ever pastored may have had 130 people for a few Sundays. Most of their churches had 20, 30, and 40 people. But they served those people well. They loved them. They tried to disciple them.

I learned about scrappy people in small churches. One of my most distinct memories was in Bristow, Oklahoma. At a Sunday night service in the early 1950s, two deacons accosted my dad at the altar. One of them held his fist on Dad’s chin. The deacon told Dad to resign because he was keeping the church from being spiritual. Dad stuck it out until he got those people out of the church. But there were so few people left, he had to leave after 9 months. Since then, I have never liked the word *spiritual*. I prefer the term *Christlike*, because it is more objectively identifiable.

My dad taught me the importance of bringing new people into church membership. He became pastor of a church in Arkansas when I was a student at Evangel. The day he became pastor, he said, “George, the annual vote is coming up in a year. I think it would be good for you to become a member so if we need your vote, we will have it.”

I filled out a membership card. I went down to Arkansas once a month or so to be with them for the weekend.

The church had a habit of putting out pastors, as many of our churches did.

A year later, Dad called. He said, “George, the annual vote is coming up. Mom and I have discovered that we’re one vote short. Can you come down?”

They had a list by their telephone of those who would vote yes and those who would vote no. Even though voting was by secret ballot, everyone knew how everyone else was voting.

I said, “Sure, I’ll come down. Do you want me to bring Wanda?”

Wanda, also a student at Evangel, was the lead deacon’s daughter, and the lead deacon was on Dad’s side. Wanda and I went down to Arkansas together. I planned to arrive about 5 minutes after the business meeting started. I walked through the door at 7:35, and all heads turned. Everyone knew how the vote was going to go. Dad had one vote to spare. He stayed another year.

Having that experience in a small church helped me when I became pastor at Newport-Mesa Christian Center, Costa Mesa, California.

When I took the church, it had just gone through a church split. In the first 6 months, the church went from 73 members to 49 members. When new people started coming to the church, I thought, *I need to invite these people to become members*. Many joined the church.

A mistake some pastors make when a church begins to grow is they do not invite new people to become members. Then the old guard, who may resist growth and change, becomes a tremendous impediment to anything that may happen. The people who stayed with me were good people, and they did not create a roadblock. But, I knew if they did, I would have enough votes to draw away.

In these situations some pastors become angry, bitter, resentful, and want nothing to do with the ministry. Explain why you did not become that way.

WOOD: I have told my son, who is a young pastor, “There are just two things you need to do: Love God and love people.” If you do these two things, you will not go too far astray.

Many younger pastors immediately try to assert their authority because they feel insecure. They try to change things overnight, do not respect the DNA of the church, and run over people. I did some of that as a younger pastor.

On one occasion an issue came up, and I was out of sorts. Fortunately, there was an older person on the board who would listen to me vent. He sat in my office about 45 minutes before one Sunday evening service while I vented. If the board did not go along with me, I was going directly to the membership. After all, more people had come to the church under my leadership than under the previous pastor. It was going to be the board or me. He did two things: He listened to me without rebuking me, and he kept confidence.

When it was time to go to the Sunday night service, I sanctimoniously got my Bible, headed out of the office, and proceeded across the walkway to the sanctuary. On the way, I felt the Holy Spirit speak four words to me that changed my life, *George, fast your tongue*. I had not thought of that before. At the next board meeting, there was an absolute change on the part of the board, without my ever having done anything. I had been overreaching and moving too fast.

Every week a situation comes to my attention that involves unwise pastoral decisions in either finances or the assertion of authority. When a pastor goes into a church, he gets a deposit in his account. It is like a bank account. He has a



I have always wanted the sense of a divine voice, an overwhelming call. I became less desirous of that when I realized from Scripture that everyone who had the divine voice suffered greatly.



honeymoon, and they give him 100 points of credit. If he spends those in the first few months, he will have nothing left.

Credibility and trust must be earned. A pastor cannot go into a church and say, "I'm God's person for this place. It's your obligation to obey me. I'm the anointed one." According to Scripture, all of God's people are anointed. Pastors need to respect and love people. They need to be secure enough to surround themselves with strong people.

One pastor told his staff the first time he met them, "I'm going to be to you what Hitler was to the Jews." That is a horrible statement. It is not surprising that, within several weeks of his arrival, the members petitioned to remove him, and they succeeded. That example is glaring, but some of the chief problems churches have are the result of unwise decisions made by leaders. Chief among them is attempting to impose authority without having earned that authority through the trust and love of the people.

You had an unusual call to ministry. Explain.

WOOD: Yes, my call was unusual. It goes back to when the deacons accosted my dad at the altar in Bristow, Oklahoma. I was 10 years old. One Sunday night shortly after that incident I said to my mother, "When I grow up, I'm going to be a preacher. I'm not going to pussyfoot it either; I'm going to be like Dad."

From then on, I was headed for the ministry. I have always wanted the sense of a divine voice, an overwhelming call. I became less desirous of that when I realized from Scripture that everyone who had the divine voice suffered greatly.

When I was pastoring, I invited Morris Williams to hold a missions convention. He was field director (now called regional director) for Africa. I respected Williams. He had a sterling record as a missionary. I took him to lunch after Sunday morning service. I asked, "Brother Williams, how did you receive your call?"

He said, "George, I never had a call. I read in the Gospels where Jesus was taking volunteers, and I up and volunteered."

I had never heard anyone give that explanation before. It challenged me. Since then I have studied *the call* in Scripture. I now realize there is a continuum on the call — everything from the divine voice to Williams' volunteering. Certainly, God equipped Williams with the gifts and graces for his calling. God also granted me the desire of my heart. I wanted to be a minister.

When we talk about the call to ministry, we

need to be careful not to project that everyone is called the same way. God uses a variety of ways to put us where He wants us. For me, it was a quiet desire that began to well up in my heart. From that time on, I was on the trajectory to go into the ministry. The only other occupation I ever considered was law and politics.

When I was a junior in college I had an offer to be an intern in a congressional office. I came to a crisis at that point. I had to make a decision whether to accept that opportunity or continue toward ministry.

Why did you choose to attend Evangel College (now University) instead of attending a Bible college?

WOOD: I did not make those choices. When I was young, I was shy. I did not feel comfortable giving an oral book report in high school. At age 10, I had broken one of my middle, upper front teeth, and I had never had it capped. When I smiled, I looked like one of the *Our Gang* characters. I had massive freckles and unruly red hair. I thought I was the ugliest person who ever lived. Because my parents moved every 8 or 9 months, I never had a social network. I became inward and socially awkward, physically awkward, and shy.

I began coming out of that toward the end of my high school years. When I prepared to go to college, I told Dad I wanted to go to Central Bible College. My brother, sister, and all my cousins who had gone into the ministry had attended there. He said, "George, you know I've had to take hard jobs to support myself in the ministry." He had painted houses, worked in a factory, and carried mail.

He said, "I don't want you to have to do that. The Assemblies of God has opened a new school. I want you to attend there and get a teaching degree so if you fail in the ministry, you will have something to fall back on." That is why I attended Evangel. I double majored in history, and in religion and philosophy, with a minor in English.

When I finished, I was single and 20 years old. In 1962, where did you go in the Assemblies of God with that kind of a background? Who wanted you? If you went to Bible college, someone wanted you; but no one seemed interested in my educational background. So, I decided to continue my education.

I considered three seminaries, one in the East, one in the Midwest, and one in the West. God uses strange ways to guide us. There was a girl on the West Coast in whom I was interested, so, I went West. She married someone else.



When we talk about the call to ministry, we need to be careful not to project that everyone is called the same way. God uses a variety of ways to put us where He wants us.



She was in the perfect will of God. I realized through that incident, though, that sometimes what we think is an end is only God's means of getting us where He wants us.

You also attended Fuller Theological Seminary. Tell us about that experience and the role higher education had in shaping your life and future ministry.

WOOD: The experience I had at Fuller was phenomenal. In those days if you went to seminary, it was called *cemetery*. I was told that if I went to *cemetery*, I would lose my Pentecostal experience, and I would be lost to the Assemblies of God. Many people counseled me not to go.

It was a daunting experience. I had never been around people outside the Assemblies of God. At Fuller I had a roommate who was Presbyterian. I thought Presbyterians were icebox believers. It turned out that my Presbyterian roommate had greater personal piety than I did.

I learned from an incredible, stellar faculty composed of the luminaries of the evangelical world at the time: George Eldon Ladd, author of *Jesus and the Kingdom*; Geoffrey W. Bromiley, the church historian; Wilbur M. Smith; Everett F. Harrison; Edward John Carnell. These people were just phenomenal.

I learned from these professors, but I also learned to rebut the criticism that Pentecostals base their theology on their experience. It happened this way. In my first year I took a class with Gleason L. Archer, a Harvard intellectual who had written an introduction to the Old Testament. Archer knew about 20 ancient languages, such as Sumerian and Akkadian. I had Hebrew and Old Testament with him.

In an orientation class, a different professor came each week for 2 hours and allowed us to ask questions. Some of the students got into a question-and-answer debate with Archer on what the phrase "husband of one wife" in 1 Timothy 3:2,12 and Titus 1:6 meant.

Archer adamantly said, "Husband of one wife means that the elder or the ordained minister can only have one wife in a lifetime. If your spouse dies and you remarry, you are disqualified from that role." I thought, *I've never heard that before; that's extreme.*

In my second year of seminary, Archer's wife died. In my third year, he remarried. He dressed differently, acted like he was 30 years younger than he was, and changed his view on the text 180 degrees. I said to myself, *Here is one of the most educated men in the evangelical world, and*

his experience has helped condition his theology.

There is danger in letting your experience shape your theology. But at the same time, what we as Pentecostals have done — when we have had an experience — is look in Scripture to see if there is any warrant for it. I think that is the key test. If there is no warrant in Scripture for the experience or, at least, not make it universal. We need to regard it as we would Peter's shadow — a unique event — because other people are not having the same phenomenon. But we can look at our Pentecostal experience and see that it is rooted in Scripture.

Many incidents occurred at Fuller that helped me see this. In fact, Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Seminary, wrote a congratulatory note when I was elected general superintendent. I wrote back and expressed deep appreciation for the role Fuller played in my life and ministry.

The experience I had at Fuller made me believe that ministers need to get as deep an education as possible. When I was a younger minister, Robert Frost, one of my spiritual mentors, prayed for me and the other students. He said, "Lord, help them lay foundations that are strong enough to bear the weight You will later place on them."

A formal theological education helps ministers build strong foundations for life and helps them avoid burnout. The reason people get burned out in the ministry is they do not have sufficient intellectual and spiritual resources to draw on to sustain them.

I walked into a pastor's office when I was a younger minister. I looked at his library. It contained only books that were titled, *Simple Sermon Outlines*, and they had cobwebs on them. Some were unused. I thought to myself, *This congregation is not getting fed, because he is not being fed. He will not last. This pastorate will not last.*

Many ministers cannot afford to continue a formal education. Often their time and resources go toward supporting their families. But with the Internet, libraries, and the many resources available for learning, ministers have opportunity to continue their personal study and educational advancement.

Continual learning is critical. As a pastor, I spent about 20 hours a week in study and message preparation. I do not know how a pastor can feed people if he is not spending substantive time in study. The seminary experience gave me the tools, resources, and life disciplines to continue learning throughout my ministry. 🌱



The reason people get burned out in the ministry is they do not have sufficient intellectual and spiritual resources to draw on to sustain them.



Mark Vega, who just began pastoring Ignite Life Center in Gainesville, Florida, after spending a dozen years as an Assemblies of God evangelist, believes too many preachers are ignoring a potent force in making church life vibrant: the altar.

“Churches are veering away from an active altar,” Vega says.

“In an age where preachers have prioritized image and style for the sake of keeping a quiet altar and a well-conducted audience, asking God for a supernatural altar can be risky, but necessary.

“The altar call needs to be the culmination of everything that has happened in the service,” Vega says, “if a congregation expects to have an encounter with the omnipotent God.”

The invitation does not necessarily have to be about salvation, but

Is the Altar Calling You Back?



Mark Wright / Rockafellow Photography

it needs to be a natural outflow of the sermon theme, from healing to deliverance.

“The Word of God is multifaceted,” Vega told *Enrichment*. “People need to respond emotionally, physically, spiritually, matrimonially, financially, and ministerially.

“Whatever the topic, people need

to have the opportunity to respond, understanding that this is their private moment with God,” Vega says.

“The invitation should be concise, precise, and Christ-centered,” states Vega. “The recipient needs to understand that what he or she is about to experience is because of the price Christ paid on Calvary.”

Vega, who spent 7 years as chaplain to the New York Yankees, believes ministers must always be prepared to lead the unsaved to the Lord. Pain is universal, and God’s people have the antidote, whether praying with millionaire ballplayers or the impoverished in the inner city.

“We are called to shift eternal destinies,” says Vega, who in the past 15 years says he always has issued an altar call after preaching.

Vega cautions against the pitfalls of altar calls, including: trying to force a salvation response, criticizing the lack of response, and neglecting those who did respond while pleading with the masses to come. In addition, pastors must make sure new believers have adequate instruction afterwards.

“Jesus didn’t say go and make converts, but disciples,” Vega says. “There is a responsibility for follow-up.”



Oversight Group Extends Services to Local Congregations

Soon after Ken Behr took over as president of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability in 2006, he became concerned that individual congregations comprised fewer than 100 of its more than 2,000 members.

Most of the members of the ECFA, started in 1979 as an accreditation agency to Christian ministries, are nonprofit para-church organizations. But Behr is convinced that the watchdog group has a great deal to offer local congregations.

So the Winchester, Virginia-based ECFA recently created a new division specifically for local churches.

“It will help churches demonstrate the highest standards of accountability that convey God-honoring, ethical practices,” says Behr, the first leader of ECFA to come directly from a church background. He served as chief operating officer of a 3,500-member nondenominational church in the Pittsburgh suburbs for 4 years.

Because most churches are relatively small, voluntary deacon boards do not always have the expertise or take the time to ensure that basic financial integrity steps, such as staff members turning in receipts, are taken. ECFA membership makes certain that such communication occurs.

ECFA members, organizations that pay according to a sliding scale based on revenue, must comply with seven standards to be accepted. Applicants are scrutinized by the ECFA, which includes 13 ECFA certified public accountants, and financial statements must be submitted annually. A 1-day field review program involves an ECFA staff member meeting with the pastor and board chairman.

Behr, who attended Fair Haven Assembly of God in Dearborn, Michigan, for 11 years while working as an executive for Ford Motor Co., contends there is a correlation between not only ECFA membership and financial soundness, but also budget increases. The ECFA local congregation members — most of them large, independent, nondenominational churches — grew 17 percent in 2006.

“ECFA church members pay attention to business better,” Behr told *Enrichment*. “The boards have a better understanding of what is required for financial accountability and integrity.”

The organization also has an affiliate membership availability that allows smaller churches to attend seminars and access hundreds of documents on the ECFA Web site pertaining to hiring, taxes, building programs, ethical fundraising, and other issues.

There are free tools on the site (<http://www.ecfa.org>) for any church to use in areas such as reviewing average salaries for pastors.

Time To Brush Up On Exodus and Deuteronomy

Americans apparently do not spend as much time memorizing Scripture as they do eating fast food and watching television reruns.

The Ten Commandments have been in the news a great deal in recent years because of legal challenges across the country regarding their public placement at county courthouses, city halls, and other governmental properties.

Yet, more Americans can name half a dozen ingredients of a McDonald's Big Mac than any of the Ten Commandments, according to a September 2007 poll by Kelton Research. And as many people know that Marcia is a character on *The Brady Bunch* — a show that stopped airing original episodes in 1974 — as know any of the laws God delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai.

In fact, 35 percent of respondents to the Kelton survey could name all six Brady kids while one out of four of those questioned knew each of the seven ingredients of a Big Mac. Yet, only 14 percent can accurately list all Ten Commandments. In the study, 28 percent say they attend church at least once a week. A whopping 45 percent say they rarely if ever visit a place of worship.

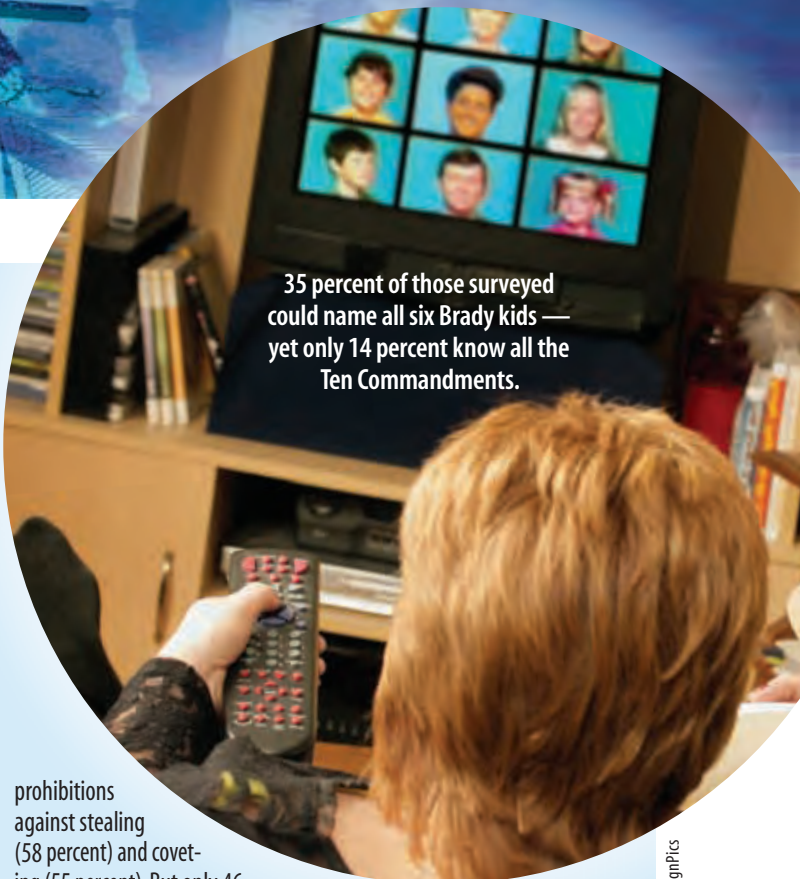
The Decalogue appears twice in the Pentateuch and forms the historical basis for the nation's legal and moral code. Some Christians have the guiding principles from Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 posted in their homes on a wall plaque or in a miniature replica.

In the survey, God's command against murder scored the highest level of remembrance (59 percent) followed closely by

prohibitions against stealing (58 percent) and coveting (55 percent). But only 46 percent recalled the warning against adultery, 45 percent the admonition to honor parents, and 42 percent the counsel about giving false testimony against a neighbor.

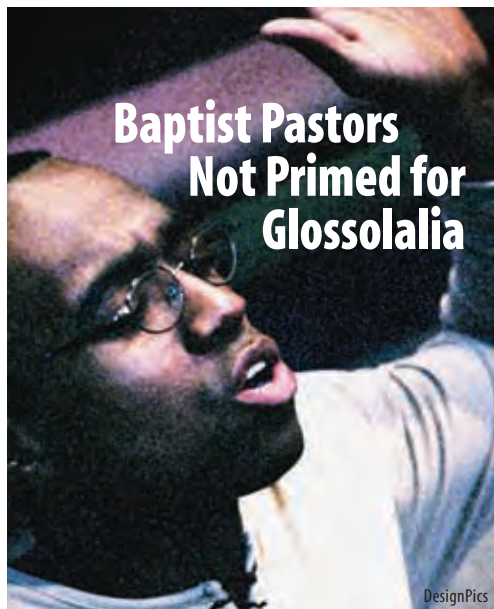
Farther down the list, 4 in 10 retained the Lord's command not to worship any other gods and 39 percent not to misuse His name.

35 percent of those surveyed could name all six Brady kids — yet only 14 percent know all the Ten Commandments.



DesignPics

Maybe people are not in church enough; all but 34 percent forgot about keeping the Sabbath holy. Ranking lowest, just 29 percent remembered the directive against making an idol out of anything. Perhaps that is the reason food and entertainment are more coveted. 🍔



Baptist Pastors Not Primed for Glossolalia

A recent study indicates that half of Southern Baptist Convention pastors believe the Holy Spirit gives some people a special prayer language. But the SBC is not about to turn Pentecostal. The same LifeWay Research findings reveal that less than 6 percent of recent SBC seminary graduates practice speaking in tongues.

In fact, SBC seminary master's level graduates from half a dozen schools between 1998 and 2004 are more likely to believe that the gift of tongues as described in 1 Corinthians was restricted to the time of the apostles (55 percent) compared to Southern Baptist pastors already in the pulpit (41 percent). In addition, fewer than 4 percent of recent SBC graduates working in the movement's ministries say they employ a private prayer language.

"More recent graduates tend to be more cessationist than their pastoral counterparts in SBC churches," says Scott McConnell, associate director of LifeWay Research, an arm of America's largest Protestant denomination in Nashville, Tennessee.

Two-thirds of non-Southern Baptist clergy surveyed indicated they believe *glossolalia* is still available to some Christians today. While half of SBC pastors agreed, 43 percent said they do not believe the statement while 7 percent responded that they did not know.

In 2005, the SBC International Mission Board voted 50 to 15 to forbid appointment of new foreign missionaries who use a private prayer language. That same year, the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, voted to no longer hire faculty who favor speaking in tongues. 🙏



HOPE

in America's Crisis

By L. Alton Garrison

As we might have said in my Texas hometown, "It ain't your grandpa's America anymore." Shocking changes have occurred in our culture in the past generation. American Christians think the unreached people groups are in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. But our nation is a land of unreached people groups: disillusioned teens, prison inmates, Muslims, addicts, the homeless, disaster victims, senior citizens, and cynical college students. Demographics and circumstances rather than geography define these mission fields. Consider these statistics:

- *U.S. News and World Report* estimates that more than 3 million crimes per year are committed in or near

the nation's 85,000 public schools.¹

- A University of Michigan study reports that 9 percent of America's eighth-graders carry a gun, knife, or club to school at least once a month. An estimated 275,000 guns are carried to school every day.²
- In a single year in America, the average 16-year-old will witness 15,000 sex acts and references on television.³
- By the time an American child reaches high school, he has witnessed 33,000 murders and 200,000 acts of violence on television.⁴
- Since 1960, the rate of illegitimate births in America has climbed by 419 percent.⁵



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These radical changes in our society have made the work of the church more crucial than ever. But the church is largely silent. Why?

Three misconceptions hamper the church. Here are these misconceptions and ways American believers can overcome them and stand together for national revival.

Misconception No. 1: America Is Not a Mission Field

In my grandfather's day Americans sent missionaries to other countries. Today, other countries are sending missionaries to plant churches in America.

Christians need to become missions-minded — to think like missionaries — at home. The strategy of an effective foreign missionary is to learn the culture, language, and how to relate the gospel so the target audience will receive it. But in America we tend to build our buildings and expect the lost to come to us, even when the unreached people groups in our communities have demonstrated that they will not attend our churches. We have insisted on speaking our own language and doing our own thing. Meanwhile, our culture has drifted away from us.

Previously, people considered Christianity to be America's religion.

Nearly half of all churches in the United States did not add one new person through genuine conversion last year.

Even if America did not widely embrace Christianity, many perceived Christianity to be a part of our national ethos. But America can no longer make this claim. The church is not out of business, but America has drifted away from the church. This drifting away has not been a slow

or gradual process. It has happened in the past two generations. In fact, events in the past decade have accelerated it.

Many Christians are convinced that America is not a mission field. But Jesus said, "You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NASB).⁶

The first stop on the apostles' missionary journey was their own hometown — Jerusalem. The same is true for us today. Satan wants to persuade believers to give up on America — to give up on ministry to our own Jerusalem. God forbid.

Misconception No. 2: Church Is Only for Christians

In America we have become desensitized to social ills and have become complacent with wickedness. Most American families with a television — including Christian families — have witnessed so much crime and violence that it is *commonplace* for us to watch someone harmed or killed on the news, and then turn to our dinner as if nothing has happened.

We have become desensitized to the sin in our society because of our constant exposure to it. The church has become our place of escape. We do not

want the church to send us into the sin-sick world. We want the church to shield us from it. But this proves that we have not thoroughly understood the purpose of the church.

Acts 2:42–47 defines the convictions the Early Church had regarding its purpose. Today, we need to hold

these same convictions and pursue these same purposes: evangelism, discipleship, gift-oriented ministry, community/fellowship, and prayer.

Perhaps your church energizes its members to change their world. But many believers only see missions as a need they send money to overseas — in Africa, India, Asia, and Latin America. They have a misconception that missions are abroad, and the church in America is just for them.

Kent Hunter interviewed 15,000 evangelical Christians regarding their thoughts on the church. He states: "Our research shows that most Christians do not have a clue to what the mission of the church is. ... We discovered that up to 80 percent of church members believe that the primary purpose of the church is to provide a place of fellowship where Christians can share God's love with one another rather than reach out to those who are unchurched."⁷

When the people in our pews do not realize that the purpose for their church includes presenting Jesus to the lost, no wonder the lost are not flocking to the church to hear about Him. No wonder America has become post-Christian.

Researcher Tom Clegg states that nearly half of all churches in the United States did not add one new person through genuine conversion last year.⁸ Any growth they experienced came from people transferring from other churches. At a time in America when our witness is desperately needed, we have kept it behind church walls and only allow the initiated to receive it.

Perhaps the church does allow people to hear the good news, but we have become so separated from certain segments of our society that some people have no desire or reason to come and hear it. The result, in

any event, is the same. The church has plenty to say to Christians and nothing to say to the lost. The church in the United States has become silent at a moment when:

- 6,000 teenagers commit suicide each year.⁹
- 13 million children live in poverty.¹⁰
- 150,000 people die because of substance abuse each year.
- 6 million people are incarcerated or on probation.
- The United States is the third largest unreached nation.
- Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world.¹¹
- 28 million people left the church over the past decade.
- 72 churches permanently close their doors every week.

Against the backdrop of these staggering statistics, pastors sometimes tell me, "We do not give money to evangelize America because we are evangelizing America ourselves. We do not give to evangelize people who have heard the gospel many times because we are trying to send the gospel to those who have never heard."

Many in the United States have not heard the gospel even once. Statistics show that many people would like to hear the gospel, and they would accept Christ. Research shows that in America:

- 17 million people would probably accept Christ if they were presented with the gospel.
- Another 43 million people are moving that direction, if someone presents them with the truth.
- 82 percent of the unchurched are somewhat likely to go to church if someone invites them.
- According to Thom Rainer, less than 22 percent of the unchurched have ever been invited to church.¹² American Christians need to reach

In or Out?

The misconception that church is just for Christians creates an inward focus, and an inward focus prevents outreach. An inward-focused church has a consumer mentality. People expect the church to serve up programs their way. While this may help attendance, it does not bring lost people into the Kingdom.

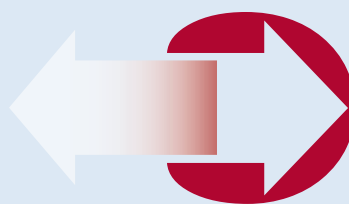
This inward focus must shift outward. The church in America must move from an *attractional* theology to an *incarnational* theology.

Today, megachurches swell with thousands of members and hundreds of families partly because of the wide range of programs and services they offer. These ministries attract people to the church — *attractional thinking*. The focus of the New Testament church was not to attract people but to allow Christ to live through people. We need to become the *incarnation* of Christ to our culture — *incarnational thinking*. We must permeate our society with our Christlike presence, our Christlike thinking, and our Christlike behavior.

Megachurches, medium-sized churches, and small churches must all be places where believers are growing

out to the lost. The field is ripe unto harvest. Surveys show that most unbelievers have a positive view of Christians, pastors, and the church. They are also deeply concerned about the spiritual welfare of their children, feel guilty about not attending church, and have a spiritual view of life.

But American Christians have the false perception that church is for Christians. If church is for Christians, why invite a non-Christian? If we want



in their likeness to Jesus and carrying His incarnation into their world. Your church can offer programs and services that attract people while adapting your methods to your area. But it is equally important that your church equip believers to carry the presence of Jesus into their homes, jobs, schools, and communities.

An attractional theology draws people in.

An incarnational theology sends people out.

An attractional theology is inward focused: *How can we serve our congregation?*

An incarnational theology is outward focused: *How can we serve people who do not know Jesus?*

If we are to succeed in the crucial objective of presenting the Savior to millions across America who do not know Him, it is critical that every church, whether a megachurch or a smaller church, turn the corner from *attractional* to *incarnational*.

L. ALTON GARRISON, Springfield, Missouri

to see a spiritual revival in America, American Christians must realize that the church is also for the unsaved.

But one more major misconception could keep you from the victory God intends for you and your church.

Misconception No. 3: It Is Impossible To Make a Difference

The math, I realize, is insane. America has more than 300 million people. Some believe there are 105 million lost people in the United States while

others believe that number could be as high as 200 million. Bringing 105 to 200 million people to Jesus seems an impossible task, especially while trying to grow your congregation in the Lord, build a new building, send money to foreign missions, and conduct weddings, baptisms, funerals, and other specialized ministries.

Impossible?

U.S. Missions reports that of the 6,000 unreached people groups in the United States¹³ include:

- 7.8 million Jews.
- 6 million Russian immigrants, largely unreached.
- 2 million people from India, the majority Hindu.
- 7 million Muslims.
- 2.4 million Chinese and Taiwanese who are either nonreligious or who follow their ethnic religions.

These figures do not take into account the whites and African-Americans who grow up unchurched and never receive a presentation of the gospel, or never receive one they can understand and respond to.

Into this vast mission field where

many people have no background at all for understanding faith, I ask you and your church to carry the good news.

It seems impossible, doesn't it? Who can overcome the impossible? I cannot; you cannot; your church cannot. But what may seem impossible to a person with no faith looks possible to a person with faith

Imagine what would happen if the churches of your area united in prayer and giving for lost people at home and abroad?

the size of a mustard seed. The Bible says, "The things that are impossible with people are possible with God" (Luke 18:27). Impossibility is no barrier when you are following God's call.

Consider for a moment the following two lessons about overcoming the impossible.

First lesson in overcoming the impossible: you cannot do it alone

To meet this seemingly impossible task we not only need Christ at work in us, but we also need the partnership and cooperation of other Christians and churches. Scripture is emphatic about the power of unity. It is critical that American churches realize they are not competing for the Christians in the community, but they are partners in presenting Christ to the *lost*

people in their communities. To revive America with the message of hope in Jesus Christ, it is imperative that churches work together. To do the impossible, churches will need to work as a team.

No single program exists to accomplish this task, but there is at least one unifying effort that every city can undertake — a prayer initiative.

Every pastor in your area can agree with you that it is crucial to pray.

Prayer along these lines is appropriate for every congregation.

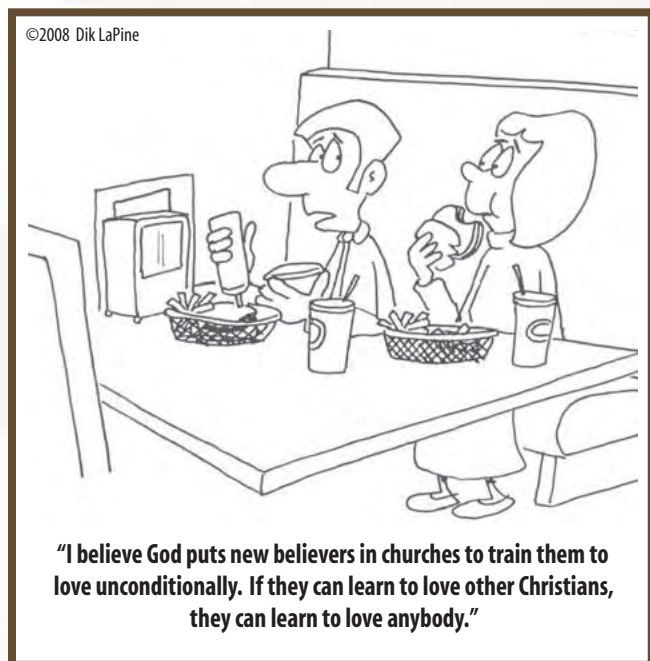
Pray for:

- unsaved loved ones.
- people to come to Christ.
- God's favor.
- a spirit of urgency. The task is urgent; we must unite and fulfill it with haste.
- each other. Every believer in our churches needs to accept the responsibility to think like a missionary and live out the truth of Christ in direct contact with the lost around them.

A prayer initiative can unite the church, community, and the entire city. Be among those who bring unity to your area. Inspire every pastor to join in leading the body of Christ in your city in such an initiative.

Another way to unite your church is through giving to missions. Giving to missions, at home or abroad, will bless the people who will hear the good news because of your gift. It will also bless your church.

Imagine what would happen if the churches of your area united in prayer and giving for lost people at home and abroad? Churches would share in the



Evangelism Resource List

The Internet is a resource to help bring your church to the community. It can also help connect you and your church with ministry partners who can assist in your mission of evangelism. Some helpful sites include:

<http://reachamerica.ag.org>

This is the ReachAmerica Coalition site. The mission is to reach spiritually lost people in America by mobilizing prayer, people, and resources for the greatest possible impact. ReachAmerica values teamwork, excellence, accountability, and a missional approach. At this site are helpful resources including downloadable videos from the media gallery to help you convey the urgency of reaching America.

<http://www.sharejesuswithoutfear.org>

Share Jesus Without Fear equips you to communicate your faith with confidence. This easy-to-use, relational approach to witnessing demonstrates that you can successfully share your faith if you depend on the power of God for results. Discover ways to witness without fear of failure or rejection.

<http://www.webevangelism.com>

This is the site of the Internet Evangelism Coalition. The purpose is to stimulate and accelerate Web-evangelism within the worldwide body of Christ. Their focus is on collaboration — linking partners in the mission to reach our world with the good news.

<http://www.studentz.com>

This site offers North American Missions Board resources to assist leaders in reaching non-Christian students and youth.

<http://ied.gospelcom.net/blogging.php>

This site's strategy is to reach out to the blogging world by building online relationships with people who have shared interests.

<http://guide.gospelcom.net/#4>

This site is a guide to Web outreach, including resource pages with strategies and principles of communication.

<http://www.evangelismtoolbox.com>

Provided by many trusted, top evangelical organizations this worldwide database offers multilingual, multiformat evangelism and discipleship resources to help you share your faith.

<http://www.jesuscafe.org>

This evangelism-motivated volunteer organization uses technology and the Internet to share the gospel, and equips and motivates believers in their faith through resources and articles.

<http://www.everyonecan.net>

This site provides evangelism tools to reach out to your community.

<http://www.christianteam.org>

This site contains sports evangelism resource materials.

<http://www.daveramsey.com>

A site for evangelism programs that reach your community. This site helps church members give more and introduces the community to Christ through practical, biblical, financial principles.

http://www.loveyourcity.com/resources/se_resources.html

Servant Evangelism is doing acts of kindness to show God's love with no strings attached. In a Love-Your-City event, Christians from many churches meet on a Saturday morning to provide a free service and give a business-like card that says: "We hope this small gift brings some light into your day. It is a simple way of saying that God loves you — no strings attached. Let us know if we can be of more assistance." On the back of the card is the participating church's name and contact information.

<http://www.servantevangelism.com/index.cfm>

This site offers coaching and resourcing for outward-focused churches.

<http://www.mtsbc.org/Leadership/Evangelism/E-Resources.htm>

Evangelistic resources. Scroll down and visit the Special Evangelistic Events and Ministry Evangelism sections.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/outreach/features/ideas.html>

This site provides evangelistic ideas and resources for outreach-oriented church leadership.

<http://www.outreach.com>

This site is a source for church communication and outreach tools, ranging from traditional to contemporary to postmodern.

<http://www.carefestusa.com>

CareFest™ is a Christ-centered community service day. CareFest™ unites churches, businesses, organizations, and cities with the purpose of demonstrating God's love in practical ways.

<http://www.network211source.com>

This site provides tools and resources to help enhance Web ministry through content distribution, audio/video technology, and training.

<http://www.churchgrowthinternational.com>

This site provides clear, practical, tested, and proven information and strategies from the rural areas in the Philippines all the way to the suburbs and inner cities of the United States of America.

<http://www.churchrelevance.com>

This site inspires and trains ministers to create relevant and effective ministries with design, marketing, leadership, and ministry techniques.

unity Christ spoke of and promised. It would be key to accomplishing the impossible — presenting a credible witness of Jesus Christ to everyone in the United States.

Second lesson in overcoming the impossible: the revival can begin in you

The story of King Hezekiah provides a clear example of how revival blesses a nation through the faithfulness of one person. Here is Hezekiah's

description of his society: "For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done evil in the sight of the Lord our God,

and have forsaken Him and turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the Lord, and have turned their backs" (2 Chronicles 29:6).

Sounds like America today.

But Hezekiah was not content to watch the moral self-destruction of his country. Less than 1 month into his reign, he led his people to restore the temple and renew their relationship with God.

For years the Jews had been living in a dark time of instability and apostasy. A nation that had once walked in the ways of God was scraping by. They were a derelict collection of disorganized, disoriented, and disenchanting people. They were products of their previous ruler, King Ahaz, who ignored, rebelled against, and walked away from God.

Yet, through the faith of King Hezekiah, their long march of disobedience and drought ended. Through his vision, courage, and faith, a nation began to return to God.

Remarkable events that had not

taken place in generations began to happen:

- Believers called on each other to repent (2 Chronicles 30:6).
- The call brought new unity (2 Chronicles 30:12) and a new desire among the people to give a greater portion of their earthly treasures back to God (2 Chronicles 31:12).
- Individual renewal grew into a tremendous corporate response as people shared their material

Where will the spiritual leaders of this generation emerge? Who will step up and give the nation, our communities, our families, and our people hope?

possessions with others in need (2 Chronicles 31:19).

What began as humble confession became a national movement of repentance, obedience, and meaningful social change. And it all started with one person.

No one can create revival, but we can prepare the way for it. Like Hezekiah who sought the Lord, we can come to God just as we are, with everything that concerns us, saddens us, and moves us about the condition of our nation. We can prepare for personal revival by asking the questions of Psalm 139:23,24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way."

Treat these questions as a personal inventory of your heart:

What about my heart does only God know because I do not want anyone else to know the truth about me?

What are my most anxious thoughts?

What are the hurtful ways in me?

Be honest as you answer each

question. Agree with God about each need He reveals in your life. Confess each sin with the willingness to make it right and forsake it. Praise God for His cleansing and forgiveness.

In this way we can prepare for the revival God intends to send — and prepare the church to carry His message to our communities and to our land.

Where will the spiritual leaders of this generation emerge? Who will step up and give the nation, our communities, our families, and



our people hope? We must step up. We have the message and promise of hope. We have the advantage of living with the conclusion already in mind.

Our hope is rooted in a true faith. It would be shameful if we did not share it. How can we make disciples of our own nation when 205 million people are waiting to hear? How can I ask you to do it?

Four simple but powerful truths must guide us.

Truth No. 1:

The command is not optional.

The first step toward an impossible goal is starting. We must tell the lost that they need Christ and explain salvation to them.

Truth No. 2: The possibilities are mind-boggling.

The command is not optional; we must obey it. The resources, innovations, and raw power available as we attempt the impossible are unprecedented in the United States.



you and your church, commit to becoming *missional*. Begin taking the steps to make your church outward focused. Every week you must release more missionaries into your community.

Conclusion: It Is Up to You

I ask you again to look at today's America. In America's short history, she has reached millions of nonbelievers around the world with the gospel. Today, however, America is a land of lost people. Use fresh eyes and a new perspective. Look at how much change has occurred in just a few years. As you evaluate what you see, you can react in two ways.

One reaction is to become frightened and concerned about how much America has changed, and build up walls and hunker down to protect your turf. Second, as you see the rapidly changing

face of America, consider it as an unprecedented opportunity to personally engage and change America. You can make a difference.

You do not need to be a superstar to make a difference. To do what I have suggested does not require an advanced degree in theology, missiology, or sociology. These ideas do not call for years of reflection and thought. Changing your world only requires that you step out, trust God, and do something.

The urgency of our times demands action. Each believer must function as salt and light in the marketplace. In the final analysis, *it is up to you*.

My message is simple: America is lost; Jesus is our hope; and pastors are the delivery system. What you do with this awareness of the need, with your influence in the community, and with

the simple means within your church will determine how you build the kingdom of God in your town. God's plan is to do His work through you.

Will the gospel reach America? It is up to you. 🙏



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13. The following statistics are from <http://www.ag.org>. statistics.

My message is simple: America is lost; Jesus is our hope; and pastors are the delivery system.

Truth No. 3: Conflict is inevitable.

With challenges come victories. Satan will do everything in his power to try to stop you. This is proof he realizes you will be successful, and he fears it.

Truth No. 4: A commitment of faith will finish the task.

Jesus has promised His Holy Spirit to abide in you, to do the seemingly impossible work of evangelism in the United States. A faith commitment is required of each minister in the Assemblies of God. It will take the faith commitment of not only you and me, and your church, but also the church down the street. Maximum evangelistic impact in this country requires the faith commitment of every American believer.

You may need to pray, give, work, and tackle challenges you have not envisioned yet. However God leads

Reaching

America's Communities

Is Every Church's Responsibility



Berryhill



Dodson



Lehmann

What does it take to effectively reach our communities for Christ? It doesn't happen by simply opening the church's doors and expecting people to walk in. To reach our communities, pastors and their people must become intentional about personal evangelism.

Ray Berryhill, senior pastor, Evangel World Outreach Center in Chicago, Illinois; Mark Lehmann, senior pastor, Cornerstone Church in Bowie, Maryland; and Steve Dodson, senior pastor, Hazel River Assembly of God in Rixeyville, Virginia, visited with EJ's managing editor, Rick Knoth, and shared how their churches use practical and innovative ways to reach their communities for Christ.

Most personal evangelism in the local church is done by less than 10 percent of the congregation. Why don't more Christians tell others about Christ? As a pastor, how do you cultivate and motivate your members to personal evangelism?

Berryhill: Many Christians do not tell others about Christ because they believe evangelism is the responsibility of ministers, evangelists, or those with evangelistic giftings. Their focus is on *having* church instead of *being* the church. Some Christians feel inadequate or unworthy because of their own spiritual struggles. The church has also failed to teach believers how to share their faith on a practical level.

Lehmann: I agree. People fear evangelism because they do not know how to share their faith. We have stopped being the church; we are playing church. Instead of asking God, "What did You initially intend for us?" we have become more institutionalized.

We need to be more radical and say, "God, You have told us to be salt and light. What does that look like in our culture?"

Dodson: The two elements our people face are fear and opportunity. Some people have been in church their entire lives and have never shared their faith. As we have given people opportunity, they have begun to share their faith. They now realize they can lead someone to the Lord because we gave them opportunity. Our church has recently started an emphasis called *Let's Catch 100*. We are believing God for 100 decisions for Christ.

A perception exists among some Christians that America is not a mission field. Why do you think this is, and how we can change it?

Lehmann: It is easy for people not to think of America as a mission field. It is easier to send money to missionaries overseas and forget that we are to minister to the people in our communities. In our church 40 nations are represented. The world is at our doorstep.

We must change people's perceptions, fears, and sense of responsibility, or we will lose the reason why the church exists. Evangelism is not filling a building or having events. Event evangelism is fine, but my concern is with statistics. Statistics in our Movement show a high number of conversions and few people being plugged into our churches. Evangelism and discipleship are best done relationally —

having our people share their faith as part of their lives — rather than as part of a program.

Berryhill: One of the reasons America is not considered a mission field is that many believe America is a Christian nation because it was founded on Christian principles. But where we were at the founding of our nation and where we are now are worlds apart. We are a nation in need of God. As we look at the needs of the nation, we see poverty, latchkey children, crime, and gangs. These



We are earning a right to be heard. We preach the gospel, but we do not blast people with the gospel. — Berryhill

problems need to motivate us to make changes in our sphere of influence. We cannot solve all the world's problems, but we can solve the problems where we live. The way to change our communities is to address the needs. Then, as pastors, we need to go out and model it. As we do, our people will follow.

Dodson: One of the ways we can change this perception is by taking people on a local missions trip. I took members of my church on an overseas missions trip. Those who went developed a compassion for meeting people's needs. Later, as we reached out into our community, they started to see the same needs. Their missionary-like compassion returned, and they said, "Our local community is also a mission field. People are hungry. People need our help." They began to see that they could be missionaries to their own community or neighboring communities.

The people in your church will only be as enthusiastic about reaching people for Christ as you are. How does that reality play out in your life?

Lehmann: It motivates me not only to talk about evangelism but also to live it. I am always trying to build relationships outside the church. Pastors regularly give an altar call; and, when people respond, pastors think they have done their duty. But they have not. To me, altar calls and building relationships are separate issues. I am trying to build relationships with people who are unbelievers.

Recently, we built a building. One day we were talking

to one of the workers about the Lord, and he said, "You have good karma." I took that as a great lesson. I knew what he was trying to say, but the verbiage was different.

We can convey Christ in a practical way to where people are living. Evangelism is not just about coming to church or escaping hell. We often focus on those two aspects. Evangelism is about life. I try to present Christ in a practical way to people.

Berryhill: Evangelism needs to be on a personal level. When my wife and I were in Mexico, we were invited to a timeshare presentation. While we were learning about the timeshare, my wife was talking to people about Jesus. When the presentation concluded, these people wanted us to come back to Mexico and start a church. She was just sharing her faith.

Many people think they need to know the entire Bible or be perfect to share their faith, but evangelism is sharing what Jesus has done for you. We try to model evangelism by our own lives. We try to convey it publicly and celebrate decisions for Christ that are a result of our personal witness.

Dodson: Personal evangelism is about relationships. In the Early Church believers devoted themselves to the Word, to prayer, and to fellowship. They went from house to house, and they shared what Jesus had done in their lives. A church becomes as relational as its pastor.

Many people have decided against Christianity because of a negative church experience or because of the lifestyle of some Christians. How can the church change this negative perception?

Dodson: Christians must not become so much like the world that the world

does not need them. We need to live in a way that shows the world that we have the answer — Jesus.

People in our community who do not go to church *hear* about God's love. But when the church reaches out and *shows* the love of Jesus, people will respond.

Berryhill: We first need to demonstrate the love of Christ in our own lives and marriages. If the world does not see the love of God in the covenant we have with our spouses, they will not believe us regarding our covenant with God. We need to model godly living and love our wives and children. Second, we need to be salt and light. We need to meet people where they are and meet their needs. When they



It is easier to send money to missionaries overseas and forget that we are to minister to the people in our communities. — Lehmann

see our selflessness and the fact we go beyond what is expected to reach them, they will be impacted.

Lehmann: The idea of living for Christ does not offend most people. I think church offends them most. God is trying to get our attention by taking away the focus on personalities. Since the 1980s some people still have a negative view of televangelists. Others have had a negative church experience.

To overcome this obstacle does not require overcoming their adversity to Christ or knowing Christ, but their adversity to Christians and what the church has become. Most of the time people see church as a show, especially if we are not living the lifestyle in public. The church needs to be more

than just a show to the community.

Dan Kimball, Rick Warren, and Brian D. McLaren coauthored *The Emerging Church*. It mentions the fact the cross and/or Christian images are no longer offensive to people. People are not even offended by the truth of Christianity. In fact, they will embrace Christ more if we set a standard. We do not need to water down the gospel for people to receive it. The church needs to be relevant without losing its distinctive.

God has a way of multiplying a church's resources when resources are used to reach the lost. How has this been true in your church?

Dodson: When we came to Hazel River, Virginia, the church did not

participate in any outreach or support missions; it was financially strapped. God impressed us to stop passing the offering plates during services, so we placed them near the door. In addition, the church did not support even one community ministry. Had the church dissolved, our community would not have missed it. We began reaching out to people in the community and showing the love of Jesus.

We began to give away groceries and love people despite our limited resources. The first time we gave 12 Thanksgiving baskets. God multiplied this ministry. This past Christmas we blessed 500 families with a turkey and all the food needed to make their Christmas dinner. We now support many missionaries. We used what

God gave us, little as it was, and He multiplied it. He continues to do that even today.

Berryhill: In 2 Corinthians 9:10, Paul writes, “Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.” God does just that. He gives us seeds to sow. As you take opportunity to sow, the Lord multiplies it.

Last year we did an outreach called *40 Days of Blessing*. During that time God redirected our ministries and saved us millions of dollars. We were planning to buy a building, but God opened another door and we rented a school. Schools were not allowing churches to rent in this area of Chicago. Because we had sowed seed in our time of need, though, God opened tremendous doors of opportunity. We are now ready to embark on our building program. We have seen God meet needs — in supplying funds and in changing strategies — so we did not need to spend money.

Lehmann: We have experienced God’s provision on three different occasions. When deciding whether to give money away or to try to raise money, we have always chosen to give money away. God always brings in more money. In our most recent building project, we felt we needed to give away all of our building-fund money. Within a few months God not only brought the money back but also multiplied it.

Several years ago during the Jesus Video Project we offered free videos for everyone in our community — about 50,000 homes. This cost the church a great deal of money, but the investment was worth it. People saw the love of Christ because we were not trying to make money, but were

giving the videos away. This made a positive statement about the church. The church needs to be about people, not buildings.

What do you say to a pastor who believes his church is too small to do anything meaningful in the community?

Berryhill: Never underestimate the difference one life can make. Mother Teresa said, “If you cannot feed a 100 people, then feed just one.”

To a small-church pastor I would say, “I was that pastor.” Do not despise the days of small beginnings. Jesus started with 12 men. They impacted the world, and the impact of Christianity has continued. Sometimes we need to be a Joshua and take steps of faith. As we take each step, each step becomes a miracle if God has put His vision in your heart. We must understand that it is God’s vision. You are just the conduit. God is the author and the finisher of our vision.

Lehmann: At times we get too hung up on numbers. We compare churches that are larger, but do we compare smaller churches? I pastored in a town of 3,000 people. In that setting, if you reach 10 people for Christ, percentage wise, you are reaching more people than I am reaching here in this metropolitan area. We are not in competition with each other. Ministry usually starts with the pastor. Is the pastor making it happen?

What impact has prayer had on your church’s outreach?

Dodson: Prayer needs to be the center of a church’s outreach. Regarding outreach, it has been said, “As long as there is one lost soul in our community, we have a job to do.”

Someone also said, “Never make an excuse why God cannot grow our

church.” Prayer empowers and energizes us. Prayer reminds us that we are doing the supernatural, but without God we can do nothing. The need to pray reminds me that my help comes from God.

Lehmann: Our Saturday night prayer meeting is the most important meeting of the week — more important than Sundays or Wednesdays. It paves the way for everything that happens in the church.

For the last 11 years we have had Saturday night prayer. People come to pray not only over the sanctuary, but also over needs in our community. This prayer meeting allows us to be a conduit for what God has for us. Prayer is the engine for outreach, as well as for growth.

Prayer keeps us focused. How do we get people who are not churching in church? Lift up Jesus, and let Jesus draw them. Let prayer be the means.

We cannot evangelize by ourselves. It does not matter how good our programs are or how nice the facilities may be; these do not change people. Prayer allows our people to take ownership, instead of the pastoral staff taking ownership.

Describe one of your church’s most successful community outreaches.

Berryhill: We had worked 2 years to buy a Greek Orthodox facility, but at the last minute the deal fell through. I felt depressed. The Lord spoke to me during my prayer time and said, *Be a blessing.*

I asked, “What do You mean, ‘be a blessing’?”

I went to Genesis 12 where God spoke to Abraham and told him to leave the land of his fathers. God told Abraham that He would bless him, and Abraham was then to be a blessing.

Blessing became a rainbow word for me. I realized I was already blessed. God was saying to me that He wanted me to be a blessing.

I told my staff, "God is speaking to me about being a blessing. How can we do this?" We decided that, as a church, we would do 40,000 random acts of kindness in 40 days. We called this our *40 Days of Blessings*. We began to seek out people with felt needs. We bought groceries for a year for someone. We provided rent and mortgage payments for a year for a family. We provided utility payments. Whatever the needs, we acted in kindness to meet them. This outreach cost us \$100,000.

The church received citywide attention. I received publicity I would have never gotten otherwise. We did not do 40,000 acts of kindness for publicity; we were obeying God. In the end about 300 people accepted the Lord. Many of these people joined the church.

Many churches are emulating that outreach by doing random acts of kindness. This has been one of our greatest outreaches.

Lehmann: For a year we did a similar outreach. We have been able to love people and change the community's view of the church. The East Coast is different because it has been overchurched with liturgical churches. But when a church takes care of people's needs without asking for money, it amazes people.

Dodson: Each summer we do two camps for the community — one for children and one for youth. We conduct a free secular camp at a sports complex for football players. Camp hours are 9 to 5. Every year families join the church because we love their children. Some people bring their children only because they do not need to pay for daycare that week. This outreach has been a huge asset to our church.

Another outreach, called *Bless the Kids*, is at Christmas. It has become huge in the community. We give each child a toy, tell the Christmas story, show an animated movie, and have a birthday party for Jesus. Then we give the families a Christmas basket.

site with live streaming and blogging. We have been amazed at the number of prayer requests that come in. We respond to those needs. We also have a weekly radio ministry. Pastors cannot be entirely dependent on technology for evangelism. People still need a personal touch from the church. We also want to be faithful in reaching people who have limited access to technology, and not just become a technological ministry.

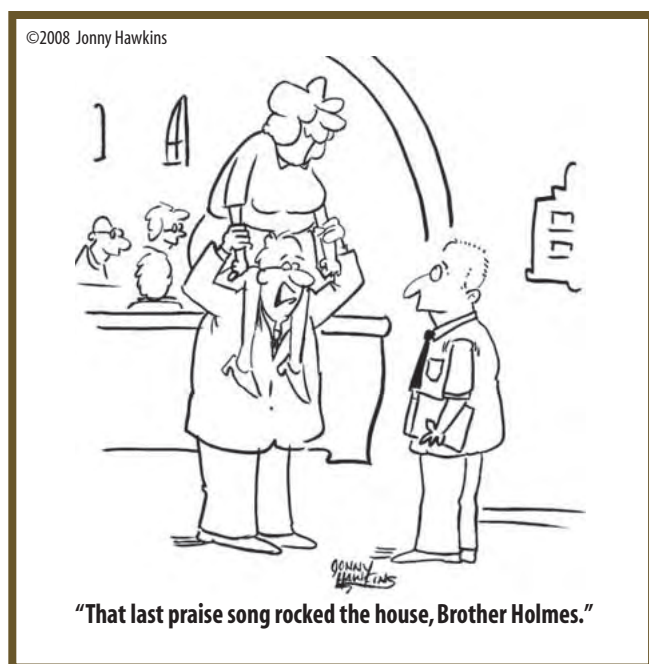
Lehmann: We do similar things with our Web site; however, people want a personal touch more than they want high-tech ministry. We cannot compete on the Web as the world does. But we can do some things better — things the world will never think about — touching people's lives with God's love. Technology attracts people and lets them know we are trying to be relevant to where they are living. But I also hear people saying, "Technology is cool, but I want something that's lasting."

Describe what your church is doing to reach the neglected and abandoned members in the community.

Dodson: Several years ago God revolutionized our church and took it to another level. One day I was sitting in an orchard wondering where the church needed to go, and I had an encounter with God. God made it real through the apples that had fallen to the ground and had been left there.

I knew the man who owned the orchard. He told me, "Pick all the apples you want and take them." I filled the truck with apples and took them back to the ladies in the church. Some apples were bruised and had scars, but the ladies wanted them because they make pies and other food items.

God turned this experience into a message. I covered the sanctuary floor



Technology is changing the face of how some churches do ministry. What technologies, if any, are you using to enhance your community outreach?

Berryhill: We live in a techno world. To be effective, we need to reach modern generations in a way that speaks to them. At Evangel we are updating our technology to include a new interactive Web



Prayer reminds us that we are doing the supernatural, but without God, we can do nothing.

— Dodson

with apples. On Sunday, people had to walk around the apples to get in their pews. The message God gave me was that many people in our communities have bruises and scratches. They have been overlooked and passed by. But they are still valuable and useful because of what is on the inside. They can still be used for God's kingdom.

Many people do not talk about bus ministry anymore, but we still bus children in for impact growth ministries, Royal Rangers, and youth. Some of the people we bussed in are now leaders in our church. Some are on my board. Some have come from rough backgrounds, but God saw the inner value of these people. He has done a wonderful job in their lives.

Berryhill: What we do is in our name — Evangel World Outreach Center. We consistently do outreaches. We were the first to bring Convoy of Hope to Chicago. Last year we had an outreach called Chicago's Largest Back-to-School Bash. We wanted to attract students. We had inflatable rides, a three-on-three contest for young people, a youth stage with hip-hop music, and games. There was also an adult stage. During this 4-hour outreach, evangelism teams connected with and loved people and told them about Jesus. Students left with backpacks filled with school supplies. We provided immunizations for students and also held a job fair.

Our outreaches meet tangible needs, provide wholesome family fun and

entertainment, and minister to the whole family. We are earning a right to be heard. We preach the gospel, but we do not blast people with the gospel. Many people have joined our church because we took the initiative to reach out without asking for anything in return.

Reaching America's communities is every church's responsibility. Please share a closing comment or challenge to our readers.

Lehmann: The great opportunity for pastors is to be who God called them to be. Be light in the world, love people, care for people, and follow God. Sometimes pastors become confused with what they do rather than focusing on who they are in Christ. The question I would ask is: When did evangelism end?

Evangelism is not measured by how many people we have or by the people who responded to an altar call or prayed the sinner's prayer. Evangelism involves a relationship. Every pastor is capable of leading a person to Christ and then walking alongside him or her in discipleship. When Jesus said to go and make disciples, He did not say go get numbers. Evangelism happens when a person can walk with the Lord and disciple someone else.

Every pastor not only has this opportunity, but also has giftings that enable him to do it. At times pastors are fearful of evangelism. But we need to love and care for people and look at long-term discipleship. We cannot be satisfied with drawing quick numbers from the events we do. Every person is

called to win people to Jesus. Let the congregation bring them in.

Dodson: The church will fail if it doesn't place a strong emphasis on the things Jesus commanded. He commanded the disciples to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. In all we do, including outreaches, we need the Holy Spirit. Jesus empowers the Church through the Holy Spirit to go, baptize, and disciple all nations. If the Holy Spirit is not interwoven in all we do, we have missed it. Be sure to include evangelism and discipleship in all you do as a church.

Berryhill: First, evangelism and missions must be the heartbeat of the church. The Great Commandment and the Great Commission need to be essential. Second, we must go and make disciples. The church needs to take the gospel to people in need. Instead of waiting on people to come to us, we need to go to schools, parks, malls, and restaurants. We need to have small groups, prayer groups, and other ministries that can impact people without being offensive. We need to send our ministries out. Instead of choir rehearsals, send the choir to the mall. Send the prayer team and the altar workers to the mall; so, when the choir sings, the altar workers are there to minister. The church needs to rise up and do random acts of kindness.

In the Book of Acts miracles happened outside the temple because the church went where the people were. Until the Lord comes back, this is what we need to do. The blessing is in our consistency, as we continually do what the Lord has called us to do. God said He would give us the nations as an inheritance. As we stand on the Word of the Lord and do what He has called us to do, God will empower us and bless our work. 🙏

Writing on the Wall: *The Future of the Church and its Mission*

What must the North American church
“become” and “do” in this season of decline?

By Ed Stetzer

In the movie, *Lonesome Dove*, Danny Glover portrays Joshua Deets, a cattle-drive scout whose job is to ride ahead of the drive and survey the terrain. Largely responsible for the success and safety of the drive, Deets would inform the team of any obstacles, dangers, enemies, or resources that lay ahead. By assessing the upcoming path, he could help the trail boss make an informed decision about how to navigate the way to the trail drive’s destination.

Deets’ role is reminiscent of the tribe of Issachar in 1 Chronicles 12:32 — men who “understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take” (NLT).¹ Today, church leaders must act as scouts, fervently asking the Lord for discernment into how they can best practice biblically faithful ministry in their cultures and contexts.

Here are the facts: North America is the only continent in the world where the church is not growing. In North America, the church is in decline. Some even claim it is dying. Most denominations — including evangelical denominations — are shrinking.

While the global spread of Christianity and its explosion in the Global South needs to encourage us, our leaders must ask themselves: *What must the North American church become and do in this season of decline?*

Loss of Influence

The North American church is quickly losing its influence in society and culture. Fifty years ago, if someone sought a position on the school board or membership in a civic organization, one of the first questions asked was, “Are you a member of a church?” If the answer was no, the applicant was much less likely to be appointed to a key civic role. Also, not long ago, Hollywood had a film-standards board run largely by churches.

Today, society’s standards are just the opposite. It is often difficult for an active church member to receive appointment to a school board. Meanwhile, the church’s influence in Hollywood now stems primarily from its members’ purchasing power, as reflected in the production of more family-friendly films.



Illustration: Sonny Carder

The New Religion

The days when the church served as chaplain to the culture are over. The culture has pushed the church to the margins of society, and the popular media, literature, arts, and politics reflect the results. In the current culture, *secular spirituality* has replaced the church. Everyone is spiritual, and the entire culture is on a spiritual quest. As leaders, we must acknowledge the fact the masses have decided that our churches do not have the answers to their spiritual questions.

Millions have turned to various kinds of secular spirituality. I call it the *Oprahization of North American spirituality*. Think back to the days immediately following 9/11. Yankee Stadium hosted "A Prayer for America." A diverse group of cultural, political, and religious leaders gathered to mourn, pray, and rally hope for the future. To synergize this mix of leaders and create solidarity, the people chose Oprah Winfrey to lead the gathering. Winfrey has become the pastor of the church of American spirituality.

Accepting the Blame

The difficult truth is that people are not as interested in the church as they once were. Recent studies show that emerging generations are rejecting the faith they grew up with. Many twenty-somethings are asking, "Is the church a source of meaningful spirituality?" Since the United States is still one of the most church-ed nations in the world, those who reject the church usually do so because of experience, not ignorance. They have found the church to be lacking. We must receive this rebuke in humility and listen to the Spirit of God as He guides us in a new direction.

Today, there is much talk about the

growth of Mormonism, Islam, and other faiths. The problem is not that adherents of these religious practices are recruiting people to their faith. The bigger issue is that the practice



We urgently need to recognize that something is dreadfully wrong when people come to our churches and do not find a meaningful encounter with Christ.

of Christianity is repelling people from the church. We urgently need to recognize that something is dreadfully wrong when people come to our churches and do not find a meaningful encounter with Christ. This needs to provoke us to look long and hard at our churches.

The Problem

I have spent the last several years in full-time research and observation of the North American church. I conclude that the church has lost its influence because it has forgotten its mission. I have seen churches across North America fighting over preferences and drawing battle lines over issues that do not matter, while the world and the

surrounding communities are dying without Christ.

If we are to witness a genuine move of the Spirit, we cannot spend our time pining for the past and for methods that no longer work. Neither should we spend our time frantically looking for ways to innovate and keep up with the times. Some evangelical leaders are in panic mode as they search for new methods to fix the problem. Solutions abound — whether it is the emerging church; the missional-incarnational movement; a renewal of polity or biblical preaching; or groups that reemphasize certain gifts, actions, or ministries. Everyone seems to have an answer.

Many of their concerns are legitimate, and worthy of consideration. But the Spirit can

only begin working in our churches when we repent of the unbelieving attitudes that have repelled the lost. At times our hearts are hard, fallow ground that will not allow a Kingdom harvest to germinate.

Nevertheless, pastors and leaders must find comfort in the fact — despite the church's decline — the gospel is still faithful and true. To reach the lost, they must hold more firmly than ever to the gospel, find stability on its rock-solid ground, and move forward, engaging the culture.

Remember, Jesus said He would build His church. This promise should calm our fears and allow us to rest in God's mighty power to work out His purposes.

Marginalization of the Church in Culture

As the church has lost influence, the culture has pushed it to the margins of society. But this marginalization is not necessarily a bad thing. Historically, God has often moved at times when society has marginalized the church.

Over the centuries when the church has gained power, the results have been poor. For example, after Constantine, Christianity became the official state religion in Rome, and the church soon became stagnant. Similarly, the church in France received state power before the French Revolution, after which France quickly went from being one of the most churched to one of the most unchurched nations in history. Jesus does not call His people to power — He calls them to service. He mandates that they serve Him and His causes.

Political and social involvement is still important if the church is to be faithful to its calling. An African-American pastor told me: "You know why I am involved in this neighborhood? Because every day we pull people out of the river who are drowning and near death. And every day we watch some of them go by already dead. At some point we decided that we needed to go up the river and find out who was throwing them in."

There are many compelling reasons for the church to be involved in social justice and other mercy ministries, but we must vigilantly guard our motives from triumphalism and a lust for power.

A Loss of Confidence in the Gospel

Many evangelicals have lost confidence in the gospel. Since society has marginalized the church, it seems people are saying: "Maybe this gospel is not all we thought it would be."

Since the church cannot be trusted, they think, maybe the gospel cannot be trusted either.

Our loss of confidence in the gospel is evidenced by the fact believers are sharing their faith less and less. The seeker movement has unintentionally disempowered evangelism by training people to bring their friends to church services so professionals can take over and seal the deal.

In addition, churches have become dispensers of practical advice. During the 1980s and '90s, pastors told

church members to bring their non-Christian friends to hear insight on everything from how to have a better life to how to overcome stress.

This method was a perfect fit for a culture that was open to vague spiritual advice — or, Oprahization. Many seeker churches took that advice and used it to bring their hearers to Christ for the answers.

Leaders spent 20 to 30 years reshaping their churches around this new vision. Churches focused on practical advice — moral, biblically

An Incredible Explosion of Innovation

Seventeen years ago Elmer Towns wrote a book entitled *10 of Today's Most Innovative Churches*. Today, in less than two decades, we would consider the things he wrote about as being traditional. The church has changed. Today, we have cyber churches, pub churches, beach churches, and motorcycle churches. We have churches that feel like a giant Starbucks® lounge and churches with campuses that are similar to small amusement parks. Some churches present weekly multimedia presentations that rival the best rock concerts of the day, while others eschew complexity and meet in the simplest surroundings possible.

It seems that every place you turn in the evangelical scene, there is something new. I believe in innovation. I recently presented a paper on the importance of biblical church innovation. But we also need to ask ourselves: *What is the source of some of our innovations?* I believe it is a frantic desire to reach a culture. This is a good and correct impulse. On the other hand, much of the innovation birthed is because we have lost confidence in the gospel and in the church. What has 30 years of church innovation produced? Our culture is less churched, and people who are less committed fill our churches.

To be fair, if we look at the churches that did not innovate over the last 30 to 40 years, we will not conclude that a lack of innovation is better. This issue points to a loss of confidence in the gospel. Herein lies the real danger. We must not replace our confidence in the power of the gospel with a confidence in our own methods and strategies.

ED STETZER, Gallatin, Tennessee

1 New Living Translation of 1 Chronicles 12:32, Holy Bible. New Living Translation copyright © 1996, 2004 by Tyndale

based, practical advice — and made inviting friends to hear such advice the church's evangelism strategy. In the process, the church unintentionally de-emphasized teaching people to share their faith. As a result, laypeople



lost confidence in the power of their faith. Now, like a bear fed by the tourists, the church is unable to fend for herself. She has lost her natural ability to evangelize.

Regaining the Gospel

One cannot read Scripture and miss the fact it focuses on a bloody cross

and an empty tomb. The gospel is about a Savior who died on a cross in our place. These are facts — not just interesting things to think or talk about — and they are usually unpalatable to our neighbors. If we do not have confidence in them, then we do not have true faith, and we reduce the gospel to a 12-step program for inner peace.

Luke 24:47 says, "Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached

If we fail to regain confidence in the gospel, subsequent generations will continue to walk away from it.

in his name to all nations." When believers lose confidence in the gospel, Christ's evangelistic mandate withers away. But those who are confident in the gospel become living epistles, God's love letters to individuals and communities, and messages that carry the gospel's prophetic edge.

If we fail to regain confidence in the gospel, subsequent generations will continue to walk away from it. Staying culturally relevant is important, and it is beneficial to minister in fresh, new ways. After all, we must remove any roadblocks that keep people from getting to Jesus. But, in the end, if strategies and systems replace the core of the gospel, its meaning and power will be lost.

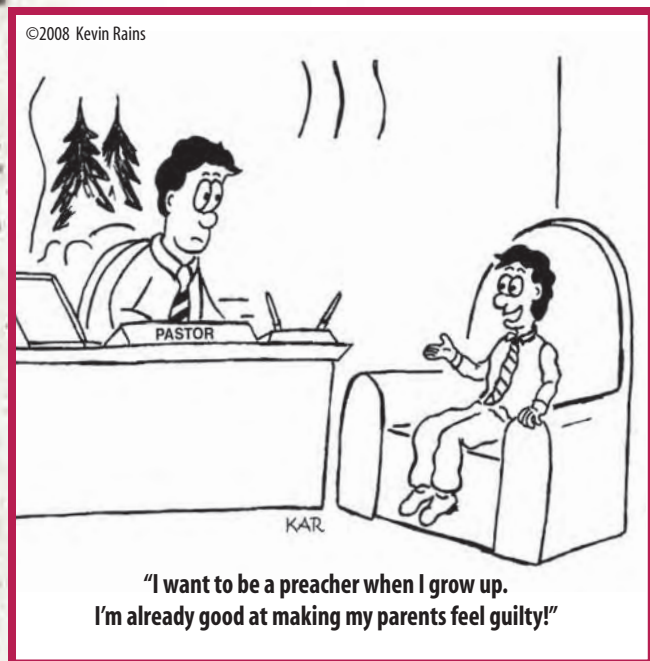
Repentance or Loss

To have any measurable redemptive impact on our culture, we must rediscover the gospel. Jude 1:3 says, "Contend earnestly for the faith ... once ... delivered to the saints" (NKJV).² Some things are worth fighting for, and we must hold on to them. To regain confidence in the gospel, we must discern between the beliefs we must fight for and those we can contextualize.

With the intention of reaching people for Christ, in the 1960s and '70s many mainline churches *contextualized* their messages. But because they did not separate the essential tenets of the faith from the nonessential, they lost their footing. In an incredible twist of irony, while trying to reach a lost world, many mainline denominations lost their beliefs. They quit contending for their core values and, as a result, unbelievers were no longer interested in listening to them.

Today, the evangelical church is in decline, and we find ourselves in a position similar to that of the church 40 years ago. We have a decision to make — for what will *we contend*, and what will we *contextualize*? We might envision the things we will contend for as being held in our right, closed hand, and the things we will contextualize being held in our left, open hand.

We must absolutely preserve certain beliefs if we are to remain faithful to the Scriptures. These include tenets, such as the Virgin Birth and the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. The Assemblies of God must also maintain other certain



distinctive theological beliefs — such as the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues. This is a right hand, non-negotiable issue for the Assemblies of God.

Through *candid cooperation*, denominations and fellowships can work together, recognizing that we all hold certain distinctives. We can see God at work in each other's movements and cooperate, while acknowledging that we also differ on some important things.

Some forces are pressuring us to loosen the right hand. In a season when the church has lost confidence in the gospel and been marginalized, some are doing this in the name of reaching the lost. They are dangerously close to falling into the same pitfalls as the mainline church.

Discerning the Non-negotiables

How do you know what to hold tightly in your right hand and what to hold loosely in your left? Granted, this is no minor task, and we need the wisdom of God to discern the difference. Essentially, you must hold firmly to your best understanding of Scripture.

As we have lost confidence in the gospel, we have also lost confidence in our denominational distinctives until we tend to act as if they do not exist. There are, however, certain things we must contend for, even if we differ on what they are.

For example, I believe in certain things that not every Christian believes in, such as the autonomy of the church, regenerate church membership, congregationalism, and believer's baptism. I would earnestly contend for any of these beliefs, just as Assemblies of God churchgoers would and should earnestly defend some of their unique beliefs. I hold believer's baptism in my right hand, while an

Assemblies of God believer may also hold initial physical evidence in his right hand.

The answer to reaching a lost world is not to create a bland evangelicalism. The church has tried this before and the results were problematic at best. Instead, we need movements that are deeply committed to their scripturally formed distinctives. We need to see God at work in movements with different distinctives. We also need to work together as much as we can without violating each other's conscience or beliefs.

Our Future

Looking to the future of evangelicalism, I expect the major issues in the next 10 years will revolve around issues of ecclesiology and missiology. Our understanding of Jesus — our Christology — will influence both of these. We must realize that Jesus sends, and He sends us to people in cultures. If we are to have biblically faithful churches living out the gospel in different contexts, we must acknowledge the different cultures around us. We must do this while still faithfully contending for the faith.

When we look at the future of the Church and its mission, we must be hopeful. Many people are longing for the past, but they forget that no one is *there* anymore. Those people are living in a different time and place.

What does the future hold for the church? Although I believe there will be a great reordering of evangelicalism over the next 20 to 30 years, I am hopeful. I believe mainline denominations will continue to decline — particularly those rushing away from their theology. I think evangelicals will spend the next 10 years figuring

out how to regain confidence in the gospel. From that gospel, evangelicals will birth a new confidence in the church.

We must desire that the gospel be reborn in every culture and community that needs a biblically faithful witness. We will not accomplish this by abandoning the authority of Scripture and a gospel focus. We must, instead, hold on tightly to the right-hand issues. But when we address the diversities of the cultures to which we minister, we must hold the left hand loosely.

We must teach pastors and church members to help one another hold on tightly to the right-hand issues. Even as we hold the left hand open, as men and women go into different cultures and contexts, we rejoice in the fact we have an unchanging gospel and an unchanging God. We must recognize that we will continue to be a church in the margins, sent and led by Jesus Christ, whose birth and crucifixion in the margins changed the world and continues to turn lives upside down. 🌍



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NOTES

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NAVIGATING WATERS *of*



the Changing LEADERSHIP

Our culture has shifted so much that we are now in uncharted waters where we must recover a missional vision for being the people of God.

By Alan Roxburgh

Today's church leaders face challenges that did not exist a generation ago. So much has changed so quickly. We are living in a world of posts. Once familiar maps of our world are being torn apart. There is little knowledge of the land that lies before us. What does this mean for the work and witness of churches? What do leaders need to do in this new location? This article provides some brief pointers and descriptions.

The Changed Realities

My wife and I have just spent 4 months and a great deal of money renovating our home in Vancouver, British Columbia. This project was something we could no longer avoid. Age and the urgent need for various repairs finally caught up with us after 14 years of living in this old, but wonderful, bungalow. I remember the day after Easter we spent boxing up books from our two libraries. As the boxes piled up, filling one room and spilling into the garage, Jane and I were aware that one of the great accumulations of 40 years of married and professional life as pastor (me) and educator (Jane) was a major library. These books represent the passions and projects of our lives. Four months and a massive renovation later, we are reassembling the libraries in new home offices.

As we were organizing books onto shelves, a folded, brochure-like piece of paper slid out. It was a church bulletin from 1980, our final year in the first church I

pastored in Newmarket, Ontario. We were there 8 years — a time filled with wonderful memories of good people and God's amazing grace, as well as profound pain that will never disappear.

As I opened the bulletin, I saw the well-worn format of a church service with its call to worship, invocations, Scripture readings, hymns, contemporary songs, sermon, and announcements. It was a strange sight after 27 years. I remembered some people who were participating or hospitalized. Many are now dead. On the back page were the programs offered by the church for that week — the women's group, the committees and board, the events for youth. It was like a time warp, describing a way of life that, for me at least, no longer existed.

How could this have been my life for such a long time and now have no relevance whatsoever? In one form or another, that bulletin still symbolizes not only the shape of a Sunday morning worship service but also the imagination and habits of many churches and their leaders across America. There may not be as many hymns sung anymore. Today there would be a long opening with a worship band and some drama to frame the Scripture reading. The sermon would be in one form or another (now with a great deal more *self-help* regarding how the Bible can make your life work better), along with announcements, meetings, and the many ways people can *serve* the Lord by volunteering in a church program.

Forms of worship and church life may have changed but some of the most basic assumptions remain unchanged. Today, we would describe these assumptions as *attractional* models of church life. It is still an if-we-build-it-they-will-come conviction. In fact, some churches across America build big and gather in many people. Thousands of smaller churches then try to copy them and feel bad when they fail. Canadian sociologist Reginald W. Bibby coined a phrase to describe what lies behind most of these churches. He described attractional churches as building their futures on the circulation of the saints.

Most people coming to attractional churches today are Christians moving to a church that more adequately meets their needs. The result is a church culture built on meeting people's needs. These churches focus on being seeker sensitive to grow their particular brand of churches.

Leaders focus on this model of growth and on how to take care of the bottomless needs of those who come. Here people can find happiness and

get fed. They feel the children's and youth programs will take care of their children and keep them safe from the incursions of a secular world.

The problems with this image are multiple. This attractional model is first, antithetical to God's story and the gospel. Second, this model misses the fact the emerging generations in North America are increasingly outside the church and unaware of the Christian narrative. Last, according to George Barna's book, *Revolution*, it misses the reality of a huge shift happening in North America in which a growing percentage of Christians of all ages have stopped attending church because it makes no sense in their understanding of the gospel and Christian life.

A huge crisis confronts the churches of America. This crisis exists on at least two levels. First, like the shape of a whale, the great bulge of its body is up toward the front and thins out dramatically toward the tail. People age 55 and older fill a majority of churches with fewer people from the younger generations attending.

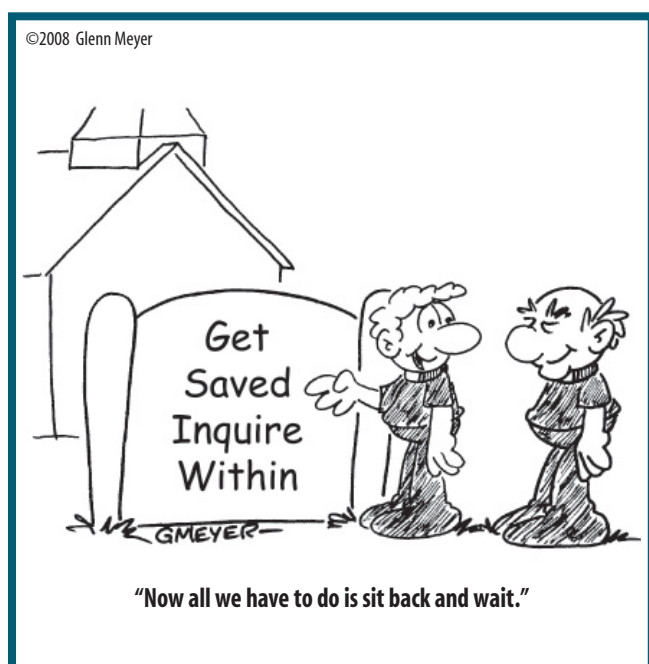
young couples or young parents has slipped below the capacity to replace members through birth. Before people write this fact off, they need to remember that all church groups in the 20th century grew through this means — not through evangelism.

Second, if the mission of God is for the sake of the world, for the stranger and outsider, the attractional model misses the point and purpose of the church. The church does not have a mission; the church is mission by its very nature. These attractional models have raised generations of Christians who do not know what God is doing in the world. These models turn God's story into a gnostic myth of a god who meets personal needs and guarantees an escape from this world. But it is for this world that Jesus became incarnate and dwelt among us as a stranger. It is for the other that Jesus came and formed a church — a new community that exists for the stranger, outsider, and other.

Today, people no longer find most churches sufficient to meet their needs or to provide the spiritual consumer goods they are eager to buy. They can have their needs met by therapists, Oprah, Dr. Phil, or by taking a class. If a church service is piped in from a central hub so a great leader is the focus of being the church, why not wait for the DVD and watch from the comfort of one's own home?

The understanding of the gospel as God's love for the world, which creates a people who enter and love the world in the name of Jesus, has been largely lost through years of effort to create attractional churches that increase membership. Meanwhile our culture(s) has shifted so much that we are now in uncharted waters where we must recover a missional vision for being the people of God.

Some months ago I was leading a



Conrad Kanagy, a college sociology teacher, recently completed a major research project for the Mennonite Church USA. If any group has been successful at maintaining its youth and sustaining a faith community across the generations, it is the Mennonites. Kanagy's findings are a wake-up call. Mennonite church membership for

workshop on the missional church for a group of 20 pastors in mid-America. On the second day a young pastor who had been quiet up to that point said, "The church I have been pastoring for

Newbigin, the question is: "Can the West be converted?"

Returning to England after more than 30 years as a missionary in India, Newbigin tried to envision

not as some evangelism-raiding posse but to enter, dwell, stay, eat, talk, live, and be the Kingdom. Notice the location — in towns, villages, and neighborhoods.



This missional conversation calls for a massive shift in vision not only for church members but also for leaders who are too often captive to narratives of power, control, and success that have little to do with the gospel.

the last 8 years is right across the road from a large high school. For several years we have been running programs to attract teens and their parents to our church. We cater for the football games; we have breakfasts, lunches, and suppers for special events at the school. Sometimes we video feed events the students want to see. These events are well-attended — people come. But I have just had an epiphany. We can keep doing these activities, we can expend energy expecting these people to join the church, but I realize now that they are not going to join. It will not happen. And, I do not know what to do about that."

It was an epiphany — a moment of insight into the fact the attractional church model had lost its power to engage people. It was a huge revelation. If people did not join the church, this pastor did not know what else to do. The epiphany was the confession of a crisis. Heads in the room nodded silently.

The Missional Situation

We need to reconceive our situation in North America as a mission field. In the 19th and 20th centuries, North America and Europe sent missionaries to other nations. Today, North America is a mission field. In the famous words of Bishop Lesslie

the challenge of a fresh encounter of the gospel with late-modern Western culture. The challenge he addressed is expressed in his book, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, in the form of a question, "What would be involved in a missionary encounter between the gospel and this whole way of perceiving, thinking, and living that we call 'modern Western culture'?"¹

In a missionary context, we need to re-enter our culture(s), dwell among people in our neighborhoods, sit at their tables, and inhabit their lives and worlds. This is the implication of Luke 10:1–12 in the sending of the Seventy. They go without baggage to enter every town and place. The other welcomes and receives them as strangers in need. They enter homes, join an economic community, sit at the table as guest and coworker, and listen to the stories of the people. God's Word instructs them not to move about from place to place, but to announce the Isaiah vision of God's *shalom* (Kingdom) and heal the sick.

Here a radically different vision for being the church and for leadership challenges us. This missional vision is not about attractional churches, personality leaders, or getting one's needs met. It is about ordinary, nameless men and women who are willing to go out on risky journeys,

This missional vision is a reversal of almost every assumption about church life in the major denominations developed in North America over the past 50 years. It is not a strategic plan, method, or program, but a way of life; a living in, with, beside, for, alongside, and sometimes against the other who will likely never be attracted to our churches as they are currently shaped. This missional way of life will transform not only how we think about church but also how we practice being God's people in community.

Engaging Churches

What can and should leaders, churches, and the systems that serve them do in this situation?

Reframe theological perspectives

A theology of missions is about God and God's story for the world, not about me, the church, or our needs. Neither the church nor the individual is the subject or focus; instead, it is what God is doing in the world. This missional conversation calls for a massive shift in vision not only for church members but also for leaders who are too often captive to narratives of power, control, and success that have little to do with the gospel.

A missional theology is rooted in a deep, unshakeable eschatological

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hope. This is God's world and God's future. Therefore, we do not lose hope or give up — we live toward a new future.

God's future emerges in the most unexpected, unspectacular places. In those places and among those people whom we tend to discount and see as hopeless, God's amazing future breaks forth. Missional church concerns what the Spirit wants to do among ordinary men and women. God's future is in and among the ordinary, the unexpected. This is where God's new future breaks out. The New Testament is about an extraordinary future coming forth from barren women, old men, blind priests, a young girl, unknown sheep keepers, and a baby born into utter obscurity. Therefore, the ordinary local church is the locus of amazing vision that we need to call forth.

Develop Missional Leadership

Leadership is cultivating environments

that call forth the missional vision of the ordinary people of God, not about CEO models, strategic planning, or vision statements. Missional church does not depend on command and control leaders, charismatic personalities, or leaders aligning church members with a big program, seven-step program, or best practices.

Missional leadership calls for the formation of a vision that is often alien to what is taught in seminaries or is modeled by the personality cult of church life. What are the skills, capacities, and leadership abilities we need to develop?

We must learn to dwell in Scripture and invite others to discover ways that invite Scripture to read and challenge us. These words sound strange to a modern mindset. What does it mean for Scripture to *read* us rather than we reading it?

This concerns issues of power and control, and predictable management

at the core of modernity. Too often seminaries have trained pastors to master the text, to be in control of its content to preach or teach preconceived concepts and principles with clear, unambiguous outcomes (code language for power and control). But Scripture contains many metaphors and images that

are nearly impossible to synthesize into bulletin-point definitions. The God who encounters us in Scripture will not be controlled or become a function of our plans.

A culture of commodification translates and uses Scripture as a useful handbook (tool) for meeting people's needs or for explaining how Scripture so obviously supports the latest seeker-sensitive turns. Scripture is controlled and turned into a weekly how-Jesus-makes-your-life-work pep rally where the pastor preaches like a religious Dr. Phil or Oprah, dispensing Christian self-help or steps to a better life. How predictable and boring. Why does anyone need the Bible and church when they can get the same advice from afternoon television without all the religious awkward *stuff*?

All this abuses the biblical narrative because it creates a sense that we have the Bible under control; we already know what it is about. The Bible is commodified and made captive to our own needs; it is silenced as a radical message that reads us and decenters our worlds for the sake of the Kingdom.

Ours is a time when we must recover some of the practices of the Church through the ages. We need to learn to dwell in the Scripture and let Scripture read us so we create a community in which we turn management and control upside down. A scary prospect for modernity and North America.

Another significant practice is that of listening to the *narratives beneath the narratives* in the lives of ordinary men and women in our congregations. We do this because the Spirit of God is among the people of God. The clues and ways of discerning the shape of





Operating Models of Leadership

Pastoral	Missional
Expectation that an ordained pastor must be present at every meeting and event or else it is not validated or important.	Ministry staff operate as coaches and mentors within a system that is not dependent on them to validate the importance and function of every group by being present.
Ordained ministry staff functions to give attention to and take care of people in the church by being present for people as they are needed (if care and attention are given by people other than ordained clergy, it may be more appropriate and effective but is deemed “second class”).	Ordained clergy equip and release the multiple ministries of the people of God throughout the church.
Time, energy, and focus shaped by people’s “need” and “pain” agendas.	
Pastor provides solutions.	Pastor asks questions that cultivate an environment that engages the imagination, creativity, and gifts of God’s people in order to discern solutions.
Preaching and teaching offer answers and tell people what is right and wrong. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telling • Didactic • Reinforcing assumptions • Principles for living 	Preaching and teaching invite the people of God to engage Scripture as a living word that confronts them with questions and draws them into a distinctive world <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metaphor and stories • Asks new questions
“Professional” Christians	“Pastoring” must be part of the mix, but not the sum total.
Celebrity (must be a “home run hitter”)	
“Peacemaker”	Make tension okay
Conflict suppressor or “fixer”: Keep playing the whole game as though we are still <i>the</i> major league team and <i>the</i> major league players. Continue the mythology that “This staff is the New York Yankees of the Church world!”	Conflict facilitator: Indwell the local and contextual; cultivate the capacity for the congregation to ask imaginative questions about its present and its next stages
“Recovery” expert (“make it like it used to be”)	Cultivator of imagination and creativity
Function as the manager, maintainer, or resource agent of a series of centralized ministries focused in and around the building that everyone must support. Always be seen as the champion and primary support agent for everyone’s specific ministry.	Create an environment that releases and nourishes the missional imagination of all people through diverse ministries and missional teams that affect their various communities, the city, nation, and world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Reprinted with permission from Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church To Reach a Changing World* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley and Sons, 2006).

mission and witness are also among the people, not solely in the board or pastor. This requires a radical rereading of some Pauline passages on leadership and the appointment of leaders. It might call for a profound reordering of polities.

We need to practice cultivating some ancient disciplines and practices of Christian life — the Daily Office, welcoming the stranger, hospitality to



The clues and ways of discerning the shape of mission and witness are also among the people, not solely in the board or pastor.

the other (with no strings attached), fasting, prayer, silent retreat, and communal discernment. This includes how we form ourselves as a people, how we resocialize ourselves into the practices of God's kingdom life.

We need to begin innovating a community of experiment and risk. The ways we must not form missional communities include: changing constitutions, writing mission statements, or developing strategic plans based on demographic profiles. We birth missional communities as we invite God's people to risk testing their vision and intuition by entering the neighborhood and dwelling among the other (Luke 10:1–12). This is a huge adaptive task.

Most evangelical churches are risk averse. We live in a culture in which following Jesus means we become more Christlike and more sanctified, in which notions of perfectionism are lurking as a subtext, and whose failure is perceived as negative.

We have developed multiple methods and means (of grace) for dealing with, getting past, or eradicating failure. We often present these as forms of spiritual disciplines.

In such contexts, failure is hardly an option much less seen as a way of working out what it means to be God's people. We intended to address, not support, moral failure. But as a result, the church has created an environment in which failure of any kind is unspeakable.

Consider how difficult it is in many churches to own the fact a family is having problems raising their children,

managing their marriage, or making ends meet. The church is profoundly silent around these issues.

Without an environment that provides a healthy context to admit failure, there can be little risk. Without risk, there will be little experimentation. Without experimentation, there will be no new learning and little adaptation.

The Children of Israel had to fail and experiment and fail repeatedly as they wandered through the desert to develop a new vision for being God's people in the Promised Land. Without risk, failure, starting again, and learning from their failed risks, they would have left Egypt but remained a group of slaves on entering the land of promise. It took years of risk, experiment, failure, and learning to get Egypt out of Israel.

Leaders form missional communities when they invite their people into a journey in which there is no promise at the beginning of what it will look like 5, 10, or 40 years down the road. But this is the adventure in which this strange, boundary-breaking Holy Spirit continually invites the Church to discover. This is the only way to make

sense of what Luke was saying to us when he wrote the Book of Acts — the acts of the Spirit of God.

Conclusion

There is much more to say about leadership in this context where we find ourselves. So much needs to come out of our wrestling with this strange, unmanageable God who has encountered us in Jesus Christ, and is

forming us into a community whose mandate is to live for the sake of the world. We live in amazing times; God's time.

The eschatological people of God are those who do not mourn in nostalgia for a time when church was just the way they wanted it. They experience the turmoil, the displacement, and the confusion of Spirit-given boundary breaking. Rather than lament loss, they break out in rejoicing because God's great narrative in Scripture and the history of the Church tell them that God is doing something. This move of God will break out in the most unexpected places, among the most inauspicious people — that is missional church. 🌊



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Roxburgh Journal is a regular feature on <http://www.allelon.org> where he offers commentary and perspective on the global missional church movement.

NOTE

1. Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 1.



DEVELOP MISSIONAL

We face new challenges and opportunities both in embracing our past and engaging our present. To do so, 21st-century leaders must develop a missional mindset.

By Don Detrick

Ask this question at your next church leadership team meeting: “How would you define the mission of our church?” Perhaps your church has a clearly defined mission statement, along with a statement of purposes and core values. If this is true, compare the responses with what you have on paper. I suspect you will discover a diverse array of responses, many of which exemplify personal preference over biblical mandate and have little to do with God’s mission.

The mission of God has never changed. Even before Adam’s fall, God’s missional priority included the redemption of mankind. As “the lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8, KJV), Jesus portrayed *missio Dei* — the mission of God — to and for lost humanity. While not a new term (it has been used since the early 20th century), being *missional* describes the church’s engagement in the mission of God as the main concern and overriding objective. People sometimes compare the relationship between church and mission to the relation between fire and burning. One does not exist without the other.

As a district official in the Assemblies of God, I spend a great deal of time resolving or managing church conflicts. Frequently, the divisive issues bear no resemblance to the

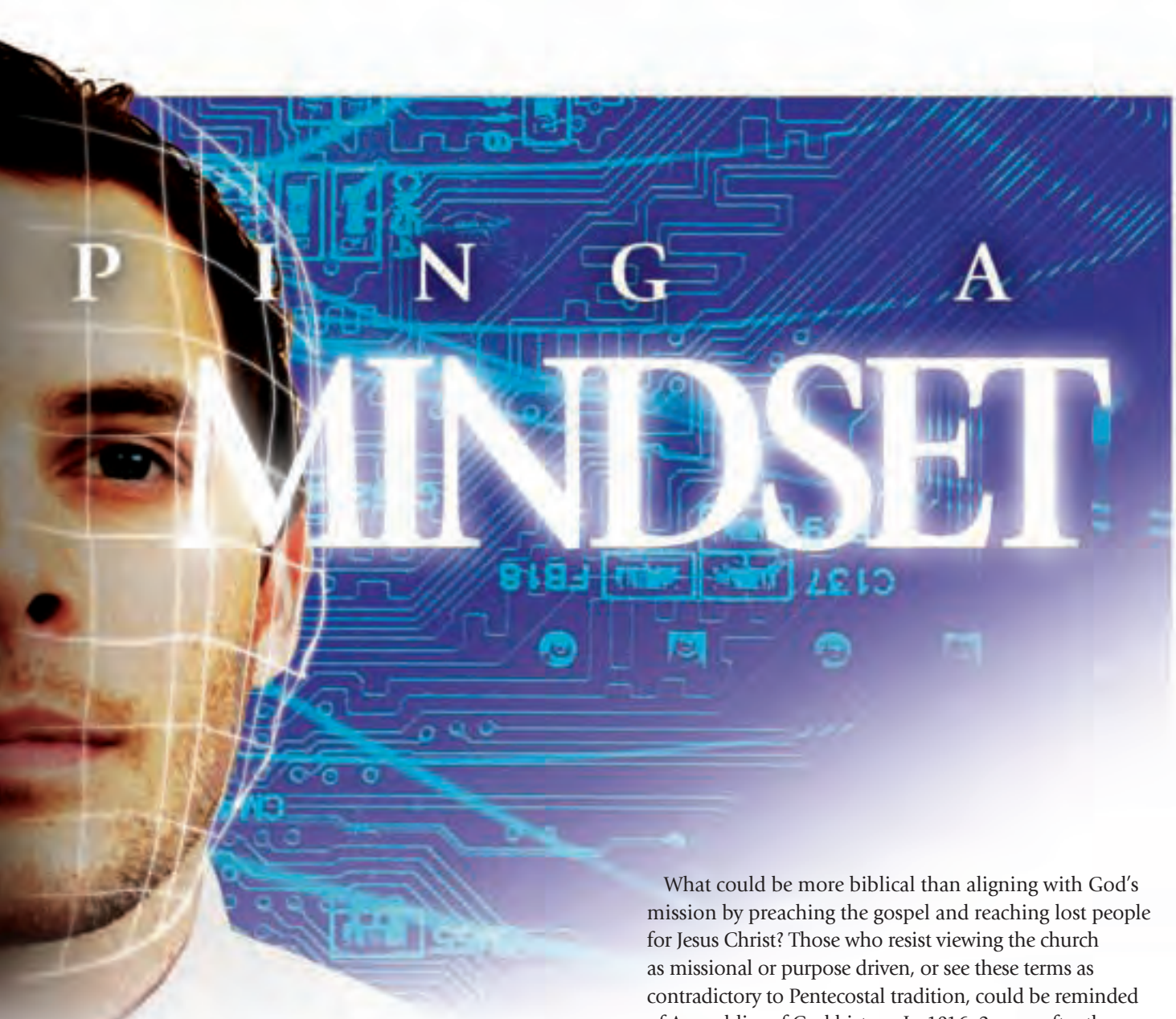
mission of God, but focus on misunderstandings over matters of style or preference. Rarely do I see churches that are missionally focused or outreach oriented quibbling over trivial pursuits. Because getting sidetracked from the mission of God requires little effort, it seems important

Rarely do I see churches that are missionally focused or outreach-oriented quibbling over trivial pursuits.

to help pastors and churches seek new strategies that will encourage them to focus on their main objective and evaluate their ministry programs and budgets in light of missional outcomes.

When discussing God’s mission for the church, leaders must be sensitive to the tension sensed by people who feel

Dave Danielson



threatened by the terms *missional*, *purpose driven*, *postmodern*, *incarnational ministry*, or *emergent*. They believe these terms identify them with unorthodox doctrine or praxis. Although they do not represent the majority of emerging or missional church leaders, there are a few people who advocate a postmodern version of neo-orthodoxy that borders on a heretical departure from the fundamentals of the Christian faith. We must not ignore these leaders, but neither should we assume that they speak for everyone who uses the above-mentioned terminology (see sidebar *Missional Church Glossary of Terms*, page 52).

From an evangelical and distinctively Pentecostal context, we need to be clear that missional churches care about reaching the lost for the same reasons Jesus came to “seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). Lost people are lost, condemned to a Christless eternity in hell. They matter to God and need to matter to us. Missional leaders who focus on the main objective will not easily move toward doctrinal departure.

What could be more biblical than aligning with God’s mission by preaching the gospel and reaching lost people for Jesus Christ? Those who resist viewing the church as missional or purpose driven, or see these terms as contradictory to Pentecostal tradition, could be reminded of Assemblies of God history. In 1916, 2 years after the founding of the Assemblies of God, the General Council approved a Statement of Fundamental Truths. These 16 points of doctrine have remained virtually unchanged since that time. In our Fellowship, we place a high emphasis on fundamental truth No. 10, “The Church and Its Mission.” This tenet of faith indicates a threefold mission or purpose statement:

- To be an agency of God for evangelizing the world.
- To be a corporate body in which man may worship God.
- To be a channel of God’s purpose to build a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son.

These three historic purposes align with the purpose-driven church model, which denotes these five purposes: evangelism, worship, discipleship, fellowship, and ministry (service). Rick Warren popularized the concept, but the Assemblies of God has been purpose driven from the beginning.

Missional thinking embraces all of God’s purposes

in fulfilling His mission on earth. Before the Assemblies of God formed, the 1906 Pentecostal revival in Los Angeles, California, at the Azusa Street Mission exemplified a multiethnic, multicultural, and multifaceted mission for reaching the world. More than a century later, we face new challenges and opportunities both in embracing our past and engaging our present. To do so, 21st-century leaders must develop a missional mindset.

Bridging Past, Present, and Future

Developing a missional mindset requires implementing nonthreatening approaches that help church leaders arrive at a realistic ministry analysis. These approaches also help them feel affirmed about the past, objective about the present, and challenged about the future. This is not an easy task because the road to change is laden with sensitive potholes, often in the form of *sacred cows* that leaders

must carefully avoid by skilled navigation. These potholes can easily disintegrate into sinkholes that can halt progress entirely.

Leaders need continual coaching in the skills that will help them become better vision casters. Skilled vision casters can help their people focus on the destination, thereby mitigating the potholes encountered along the journey. Leaders must remember that missional strategies are biblical. Missional strategies follow the best traditions of the Christian faith by placing a high priority on leading people to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

When viewing or preparing their annual reports, churches need to ask the right questions. Instead of, *Were we able to wallpaper the bathrooms, repave the parking lot, and still balance the budget?* a better question would be, *How much of our budget did we invest in evangelism, in outreach to those in our community*

who do not know Jesus Christ? Instead of, *Were we able to fill the volunteer slots in our 47 programs so we could keep our people busy at the church 24/7?* a better question would be, *Did we evaluate every ministry opportunity in light of our mission statement, our purposes, and core values to ensure we are in proper alignment with the mission of God?*

How can pastors and churches cling to tradition while ignoring the mission field around them? Speaking as one who values history and tradition, my tendency is to cherish those things that have been meaningful to me. In matters of faith and those things that facilitated my spiritual formation, a strong emotional bond enmeshes my feelings. I grew up in an Assemblies of God church where my mother/Sunday School teacher effectively used a flannel graph and opening exercises to reach my peers and me for Christ. But my fond memories of those relics of the past do not translate into a belief

► Missional Church Glossary of Terms

Apostolicity: This means different things to different constituencies. In most contexts related to emerging, missional churches, this simply means following the biblical mandate to have a divine sense of being *one sent on a mission*. In some emerging charismatic churches this has a different meaning having more to do with a restoration of the gifting and authority of an apostle, usually in the context of a hierarchical power structure.

Emergent/emerging churches: Refers to those who are taking a fresh look at church structures with a bent toward creatively engaging culture for Jesus Christ, much as any missionary would do when entering a new field.

Incarnational ministry: In simplest

terms, this defines a response to the question, *What would Jesus do?* Jesus crossed cultural and social boundaries to meet human physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual needs.

Missional: The essential nature and vocation of the church as God's called and sent people for the purpose of inviting and equipping individuals to be authentic disciples of Christ.

Missional churches: Reproducing communities of authentic disciples, being equipped as missionaries sent by God, to live and proclaim His kingdom in their world.

Missional leadership: In simple terms, the contrast between Jesus saying, "Follow Me," and a boss saying, "Go do it."

Influence versus power.

Missional structures: The basic structure is the church community, connected to other faith communities, not a denominational hierarchy. The church must have a biblical structure, not one built on tradition. The church needs to reflect the diversity of its cultural context.

Theocentric mission theology: The idea that mission is not something the church does (program), but that mission is the essence of the church. Our central mission is God's mission, to "seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10).

DON DETRICK, Snoqualmie, Washington

Missional leaders recognize the comfort of living in nostalgic niches comes with a price.

that yesterday's tools or strategies will work to reach children and families in today's culture.

When our memories of the past are more exciting than our vision for the future, we have begun to die. This applies both personally and organizationally. It is easy to understand the sense of security felt by those who have retreated into their sanctuaries of tradition, where the comforting patina of familiarity obscures change. Nevertheless, missional leaders recognize the comfort of living in nostalgic niches comes with a price. People who live in the past exchange it for irrelevance in the present and extinction in the future. This does not seem like a good exchange. Leaders must refuse to worship the trappings of the past. Instead, they must choose to worship Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is always encouraging His people in the mission of God and empowering them to engage present and emerging generations.

One challenge is in helping a younger generation of pastors celebrate accomplishments and even some of the nostalgia of the past, while building in the present with an eye toward the future. It takes more patience, skill, and diplomacy than some are willing to exert to allow a measure of reminiscence to help us build on the foundations of the past. This is not an easy task. At times even the most tactful and compelling leaders have difficulty casting vision for the future when so many people focus their eyes on the rearview mirror.

A healthy church will view outreach to the community as its primary

mission. Missional churches embrace the idea of God's kingdom being people, not a place (building or denomination). These churches act out biblical principles of mission within the cultural context of the place in which people live. This contrasts with the traditional North American perspective of the church as a place where *religious* services take place, primarily to meet the felt needs of the congregation. This describes the posture of many Assemblies of God churches that report few if any conversions or baptisms on their ACMRs.

While some ministers and churches view themselves as friendly, their numbers indicate that being amiable to each other is not, in itself, a strategy that reaches lost people. Both attendance and budgets reveal the painful truth that many of our churches are more concerned about maintaining what is going on within the four walls of their building than they are about intentionally bringing people in from the outside.

It seems significant that on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit thrust the newly empowered believers from the relative comfort and security of their congregational meeting space out into the streets where the Holy Spirit gave them a new message in the language of the

people. Missional Pentecostals dare not lose the same outward focus in reaching the multiple cultures, languages, and people groups represented in the 21st century.

Maintenance or Mission?

Developing a missional mindset involves understanding the tension and resulting church conflict between maintaining traditional systems and adapting emerging strategies for missional outreach. Regardless of the size of the church or community, Spirit-led pastors balance the mechanics of contextualized, missional ministry with the dynamics of the Holy Spirit. Some in our Fellowship emphasize the mechanics over the dynamics and vice versa. These individuals and churches saddle themselves (consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally) with an either-or perspective of ministry: You either do it my way (the *right* way) or you will fail (the *wrong* way). The danger is in stifling creativity, leading to both arrogance and ignorance.





We must not define missional thinking to *either/or*. Instead, it recognizes the importance of alternative models, styles, and methods, creatively birthed by the Holy Spirit and targeted for successful ministry and outreach in the community. Everything done needs to seek to combine human effort with the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "Without Me [Him] you [we] can do nothing" (John 15:5, NKJV). On the other hand, without our cooperation, the Holy Spirit will be unable to accomplish God's providential purposes through us.

When I was a young believer with long hair, sitting in a circle, playing the guitar, holding hands, and singing *We Are One in the Spirit*, was an effective strategy to engage other young people and help them find Jesus. Today, an effective strategy might involve meeting at Starbucks®, blogging, lighting candles, and having prayer stations. Every generation of Christians or sector of the Christian church tends to think the methods and styles used effectively to engage them and their peers are still the most effective methods or styles.

This is exaggerated when any given group believes their particular approach is the only valid biblical approach, and will work with all people, in all cultures, at all times, and in all places.

Such thinking leads to dysfunctional systems because there is no single

are able to integrate missional strategies into their DNA from the beginning. It is usually a painful process to transform an existing church because the church must remove the old wineskins or at least displace them before implementing

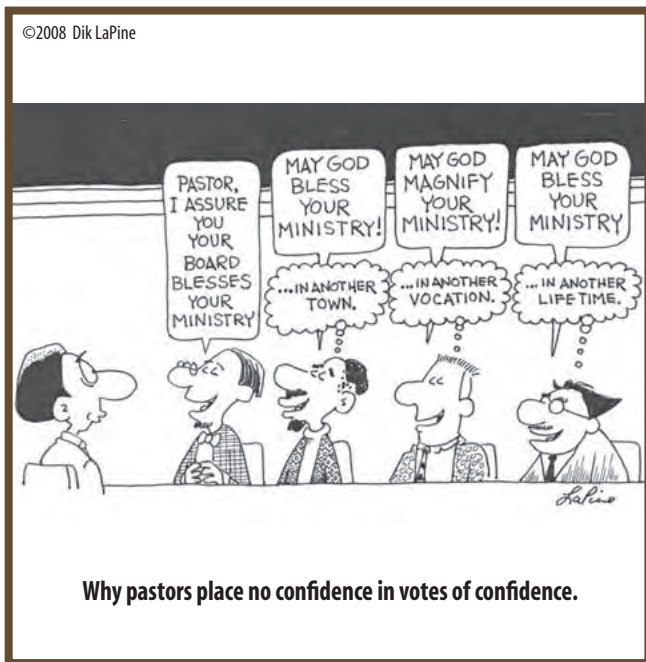
While not ignoring the rest of the world, pastors and churches need to understand that North America represents the new mission field of the 21st century.

approach that works with all people in all cultures, at all times, and in all places. If there were, there would be no need for cross-cultural training for missionaries, something most Christians readily accept. While not ignoring the rest of the world, pastors and churches need to understand that North America represents the new mission field of the 21st century. Leaders must be aware that cultural and ethnic diversity have completely changed the face of our population.

the new wine innovations. As Jesus said, old wineskins will explode if we indiscriminately pour new wine into them. They cannot tolerate the transformation. Unfortunately, many existing traditional churches will not tolerate change and are bursting with messy conflict.

When confronted with change, some churches cling to traditional methods that have been part of their DNA and history since their beginning. When conflicts arise, and they will because change is inevitable, leaders must be prepared to deal with these conflicts in a biblical and strategic manner.

In our postmodern world, many godly people tend to view most changes in society from a negative perspective. Gone are the good old days when life was stable and people prioritized and celebrated traditions; they did not stigmatize and relegate them to the back burner. When the new pastor wants to incorporate a new strategy — such as a more casual dress code — traditionalists hang on to their suit-and-tie traditions and deem the new concept heretical. After all, they grew up getting dressed up in their Sunday best. *Pastor Johnson always encouraged us to look our best for the Lord. Why would this new pastor want us to offer God something less than our best, especially on Sunday?*



Strategic Leadership

Developing a missional mindset requires a willingness to navigate and negotiate the conflict when missional strategies collide with traditional structures. It is significant that most successful missional churches are new church plants. This is not surprising, since new churches

DEVELOPING A

To answer their objections and mitigate the resulting conflict, leaders must help people see the difference between style and substance. There is no biblical mandate for Sunday dress any more than there is for any other day of the week.

People link traditions to personal preference and style, rather than substance. Short term, the personal preference of one person or group becomes the *style* of the group. If this trend continues over an extended period of time, it becomes *tradition* and eventually becomes institutionalized. Given enough time, it becomes enshrined as a holy icon.

A new Hammond electric organ with a Leslie speaker was an innovative technology in church 65 years ago. These organs may have been hard to

sell to a conservative congregation. After all, worldly people listened to organ music in the background of their favorite radio dramas. They also listened to organ music at the theater, skating rink, ballpark, and other places of *questionable amusement*. Many reasoned that electric organ music must be sinful. "And here they are, bringing the devil's instrument right into our church!" some may have lamented. As early as 1861, Charles Spurgeon refused to place an organ in his 5,000-seat Metropolitan Tabernacle because he feared people would come to hear the music, not the message.

Over time, the organ and organ music became the musical tradition most associated with church. When Brother Jones bought the new organ so church organist, Sister Jones, could

have the latest bells and whistles an organ could offer, everyone agreed it was a win/win. The church got the latest organ technology, Sister Jones got to play it every Sunday, and her husband paid for it. At the same time, the organ tradition became an institutional part in the church. But that was 40 years ago, and Sister Jones was 35 years old. Today she is 75 and still insists on playing the organ every Sunday. Woe to the pastor who wants to change this sacred tradition.

Unless leaders communicate clearly that substance is more important than style, churches will continually fight battles over style. If we cannot change style while maintaining the substance of the biblical mandate, we will never be able to contextualize and communicate the gospel in a

LDR Church Leadership

One way the Northwest Ministry Network district leadership encourages churches to become more missional is through the Church Leadership Development Cohorts. Mel Ming and Steve Mills head up this initiative that began in 2000.

Our experience shows that churches completing the LDR Church Development Process are twice as likely to grow compared with those not involved in a cohort. How does this process work?

Vision

To provide effective, cutting-edge *coaching* and *peer training* for church leaders who desire to build healthy growing churches that effectively reach the unchurched, and develop fully devoted followers of Christ who will use their gifts and abilities to impact others.

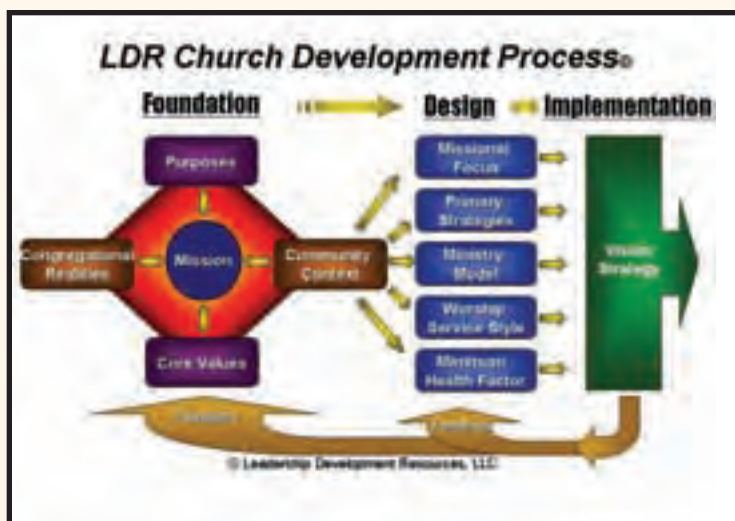
What Are LDR Church Leadership Development Cohorts?

They are groups of pastors with their church leaders who meet 5 times per year for personal and church leadership development and growth. The cohorts involve peer mentoring with a coach in a 2-year developmental cycle.

What Is the LDR Church Leadership Development Cohort Process?

Foundation Phase

- *Mission*. What is God leading us to do? What is our mission?
- *Core values*. Who has God shaped us to be?



If leaders are to succeed in developing missional churches, they must help people see beyond their own angst over *what was* by providing a clear vision of *what can be*.

culturally relevant way. Interesting enough, many contemporary worship leaders embrace a retro-perspective and value a Hammond B2 or B3 organ as a viable worship tool. What was old is new again, to the pleasure of some, and the bewilderment of others.

Leaders face the challenge of objectivity when tears, ragged emotions, feelings of betrayal, and strife cloud people's perceptions of reality. Yet, if leaders are to succeed in developing missional churches,

they must help people see beyond their own angst over *what was* by providing a clear vision of *what can be*. This requires clearly identifying strategies and methods as being in alignment with our doctrines and biblical core values. Missional leaders must avoid manipulative, emotional rhetoric while offering an intelligent, biblical, and Spirit-led presentation of missional thinking to those struggling with doctrinal, procedural, or philosophical objections.

Courageous Leadership

Developing a missional mindset means encouraging courageous leadership. One of the outstanding features of the emergent church culture is the willingness of young (and some not so young) leaders to attempt innovative approaches. For many of them, *out-of-the-box* is not an adequate description. They do not even acknowledge the presence of the box.

A new generation of church planters are not concerned about sacred cows or trying to please those whose view of the church does not go beyond their own comfort zones and needs. They embrace a bigger vision: Engaging people for Christ in a culturally relevant way. To them, church in a coffeehouse is as legitimate as having church in a stained-glass building with a steeple — and much more approachable.

Many pastors would love to see change in their churches, but stagnate because church leadership is unable or unwilling to pay the price for change. The pastor knows the church lambasted his predecessor and voted him out for his attempt to extricate Sister Jones from the organ. He knows the church cannot survive a repeat performance, so he tolerates the noise and waits for the day when Sister Jones will go to heaven.

Leaders must do whatever possible to change church organizational structures that tradition has crippled. Courageous leaders do not maintain systems that have lost their effectiveness because no one wants to rock the boat. Pastors paralyzed by fear cannot lead successfully; they hinder the missional work of the church. Leaders must place their security in Christ, not in a paycheck or in a false sense of unity that can erupt into conflict whenever he or someone else challenges a tradition.

Development Cohorts

- *Church purpose.* Based on Scripture. Why do we exist as a church? What are the functions of His church?
- *Congregational realities.* Who are we now? Who makes up our church?
- *Community context.* What is our community like? Who makes up our ministry area? What are the unchurched like?

Design Phase

- *Identify missional focus.* Who is God calling us to reach?
- *Identify primary strategy for each purpose.* What strategies does God want us to use?
- *Identify ministry model.* How does God want us to do church?
- *Identify worship service style.* What style of worship is appropriate for our mission?
- *Identify minimum health factors from church health survey.* What do we need to strengthen to reach our full Kingdom potential?

Implementation Phase

Each church develops an implementation plan for the next 1 to 2 years. The implementation plan seeks to help the church become healthy.

DON DETRICK, Snoqualmie, Washington

Sacrificial Leadership

Developing a missional mindset means caring more about God's kingdom than your own. This is best reflected in Kingdom living, not Kingdom building. God responded to King Hezekiah's prayer for healing by giving him a 15-year life extension. Nevertheless, his poor judgment brought a severe reprimand from the prophet Isaiah, and the next generation felt the consequences.

Hezekiah's response to Isaiah was almost flippant: "This message you have given me from the Lord is good." But the king was thinking, *At least there will be peace and security during my lifetime* (2 Kings 20:19, NLT).¹ Hezekiah represents current church leaders who choose to live in the present on the storehouse of the past, while ignoring diminishing returns and the ultimate destruction of the institutions they hold dear. *As long as everything stays the same for my lifetime, I'm happy with the status quo*, they think.

Contrast Hezekiah's attitude with the sacrificial leadership of Jesus, who cared not only about His inner circle, but also about every person who would ever live, including you and me. To Him, it was not His comfort or convenience that mattered; it was us. We count. And He is counting on us to complete His mission.

Using traditional terminology, developing a missional mindset means doing the will of God. But we must realize that this goes far beyond the typical Pentecostal litmus test of *having good services*. It means asking hard questions about the missional impact of our church beyond the walls of our building, both in our community and beyond.

In contemporary language, developing a missional mindset means the church must become the feet and hands of Jesus, going across cultures

Missions-minded or Mired in Maintenance?

If your church revolves around itself and only provides programs and services for its members, it is a *maintenance* church. But God intends your church to become a *missional* church.

Is your church missional? Here are some ways you can recognize a missional church:

- **Members of the congregation think like missionaries.** In a maintenance church, members focus on what the upcoming programs and ministries will do for them. In a missional church, members focus on how the programs and ministries will bring new people to church and to Christ.

- **Members are willing to sacrifice their personal preferences to win the lost.** If your church is in a college town, and your worship band plays Switchfoot tunes, and people over 50 are rocking out in your pews, then yours is probably a missional church. The older generation has given up their preference in music to ensure your church is welcoming to the young community.

- **Members make the people outside the church more important than those who are inside.** Members of the missional church love and support one another, but their camaraderie is that of battlefield soldiers who are united for the greater purpose of rescuing the lost people beyond the church walls.

Perhaps this description fits your church, or maybe you cannot decide whether you are a maintenance church or a missional church.

Here is a determining question: When programs for believers are in competition with programs for the lost in your church, which gets served first — the Christians or the lost?

Becoming a missional church means that you have rejected the idea that America is not a mission field and have allowed yourself to think like a missionary in reaching your community. You have also rejected the idea that church is only for Christians and have allowed your congregation to break out from the walls and compel the lost to come in.

L. ALTON GARRISON, Springfield, Missouri

and socio-economic barriers to touch people of all ethnicities in His name. As missionaries to the 21st century, we need a fresh vision for the future, gaining perspective from the past, but refusing to live there. We must be willing to accept the discomfort of discarding traditions when they collide with missional purposes. Only then will we reach beyond our own comfort zones, allow the Holy Spirit to lead us, and

accompany Jesus on His mission across the street and around the world. 🌐



DON DETRICK, secretary/treasurer, Northwest Ministry Network, Snoqualmie, Washington

ENDNOTE

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It does not matter who you are or where you pastor, **God is calling your church to grow.**

Birthing a Move of God

By Randy Valimont

Gone With the Wind, perhaps the grandest cinematic portrayal of the state of Georgia, has painted an epic Civil War canvas for millions of viewers. In the middle of the plantation pomp, battlefield blood, and Atlanta ash, a memorable phrase emerges when, in the movie, a woman went into labor. The servant assisting Scarlett O'Hara in delivering the woman's baby is frustrated because she has been suddenly thrust into the role of midwife.

"We got to have a doctor," she says. "I don't know nothin' 'bout birthin' no babies."

If only pastors would be so honest.

The birth process is a powerful illustration of the nature of ministry. It represents the greatest share of what pastors do. But we do not always recognize our role.

Many pastors fail to identify opportunities for new spiritual birth. They think that unless they are pioneering a new church, the birthing process in their church has been completed. They believe that their church's original birth was flawed and the clock needs to be turned back so the church can be created all over again.

No, and no again.

DNA, Culture, and Rebirth

My entire pastoral ministry has been in Georgia. Both churches I have pastored have been long-established Assemblies of God congregations. I did not have opportunity to start fresh; I had to deal with what I inherited.

Pastors coming into an inherited ministry may believe they cannot have a significant turnaround or

transformation. This is not true. God is creative; He desires to do something new. But His renewing plans for a church do not ignore or ride roughshod over what He has done in the past.

Pastors who begin to shepherd an established church need to know the church's DNA. A church's DNA is its collective bloodstream; it identifies who it is. A pastor needs to ask: *How was this church founded? What is the church's spiritual focus?*

Much of what a church does connects to its external culture. Once you identify the characteristics of this culture,

you can identify areas in the church that will benefit from change. You can change the culture of the church; you cannot as easily change the DNA of the church.

When I came to First Assembly in Griffin, there was a long-established

schedule of services: Sunday School along with Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night services. I did not try to change this. But I did begin to improve and contemporize these services so we could minister more effectively to those we were trying to reach.

We did the same thing at our church in Toccoa. That church's DNA developed into a poor church-growth and poor evangelism culture. It was a culture of defeat. There were only 35 people, and they felt defeated. We prayerfully implemented what God wanted us to do in that particular culture, and we saw God move.

I brought the same kind of vision to First Assembly in Griffin. We moved the time for Sunday School and changed its name to Christian education.

Sunday night service is no longer popular in some

Pastors coming into an inherited ministry may believe they cannot have a significant turnaround or transformation.

Birthing a Move of

congregations. Instead of giving up that service, we shaped it to fit people's needs. On Sunday nights we often have 1,400 people in attendance. Many times we receive an offering of \$20,000. People frequently receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit while others give their hearts to Christ. Why on earth would I want to mothball Sunday night service?

We celebrated what First Assembly had, but we also updated it, reconceptualized it, and transformed it so it more powerfully works in people's lives.

When a pastor comes to a church and tries to change the church's DNA, he disrupts the life, ministry, and mission of the congregation. Do not try to change the DNA of the church. If you do, one of two things will happen: the church will either die or split. However, the pastor who prayerfully reshapes a church's culture based on the DNA God has planted will see life-giving results. That church will grow and begin to meet an ever-expanding array of needs in the community.

New Birth, New Vision

When I came to First Assembly, I was aware of principles I had seen work over the years. But birthing a move of God is unique for each church. What God does in Griffin, Georgia, will be different from what He does

resonates through the congregation. Think about the time the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and conceived Jesus. A church's rebirth is not the same as that unique historical event, but there comes a point when God conceives a vision in the shepherd's

While some churches do not intend to, they commit spiritual abortion because they do not want to endure the pain of birthing a new life.

in Pensacola, Florida, or Naperville, Illinois, or in any other place. In many cases pastors have tried to adopt a move of God from somewhere else. You cannot adopt or even adapt a move of God. You *birth* a move of God.

Giving birth is the most dangerous time in a mother's and baby's life. If a physician is not present or is not giving full attention to a woman in labor, one of three tragedies can occur: (1) the baby can die; (2) the mother can die; or, (3) both can die. During labor, there is discomfort, pain, and

heartache, but the birth process brings new life. This is the will of God. This is what God wants." At that moment a move is ready to be birthed, to come into full expression in the church's midst.

Then the pain comes. Pain results from misunderstandings, from less-mature members in the congregation resisting new direction, and from people trying to hold on to their kingdoms of influence. Whatever its cause, the pain of new birth must be endured if a move of God is to fully come to life. While some churches do not intend to, they commit spiritual abortion because they do not want to endure the pain of birthing new life. They are unwilling to go through the process of giving birth. They give up and go back to their tired and aging previous existence.

Some churches earnestly pray for God to move in their midst and, in a sense, a new move of God and of the Spirit is conceived. At conception, this move of God is supernaturally implanted within the heart of the pastor and

heart and that pastor can say, "This is the will of God. This is what God wants." At that moment a move is ready to be birthed, to come into full expression in the church's midst. Then the pain comes. Pain results from misunderstandings, from less-mature members in the congregation resisting new direction, and from people trying to hold on to their kingdoms of influence. Whatever its cause, the pain of new birth must be endured if a move of God is to fully come to life. While some churches do not intend to, they commit spiritual abortion because they do not want to endure the pain of birthing new life. They are unwilling to go through the process of giving birth. They give up and go back to their tired and aging previous existence. Recognizing a move of God and seeing it come to life will change everything you do as a church. It changed First Assembly. We have a mandate to be a place of healing, evangelism, and a place where the presence of God dwells. This is the living identity birthed in our midst. The church is fulfilling this mandate well in the power of the Spirit. When people walk into our church, they sense that Jesus is here. The presence of God gives our people courage to do the ministry to which God has called



God

them — ministry they would fail to do otherwise.

Growth Follows Birth

If parents bring a 10-pound newborn home from the hospital, they will brag to their neighbors about the strapping, healthy child God gave them. But if their baby still weighs 10 pounds 6 months later, they will visit every doctor in the city trying to find out what is wrong.

When I came to Griffin, our Sunday morning attendance was 400. Today, we have grown to almost 4,000 people. A church's attendance does not need to reach some magic number, but growth is a nonnegotiable characteristic of life. It does not matter who you are or where you pastor, God is calling your church to grow.

Each pastor must get direction and vision from the Lord, not just copy what someone else is doing. When we came to First Assembly 12 years ago, three crises were ongoing: a spiritual crisis, a numerical crisis, and a financial crisis. Rather than being discouraged, I saw that the church was in a position to grow. Any time a church has two or three such crises, something will happen.

We began to emphasize salvation, which created enormous momentum. New people came to church and were born again. They then brought their unsaved friends, and these individuals were born again as well.

We started a prayer meeting on Saturday nights and prayed specifically for our people to have the heart of God to win the lost around them. We prayed that people would encounter God at our altars and be saved. We prayed that our people would bring their lost loved ones and friends.

In the South, people do not hesitate to bring their unsaved friends to church because church is part of

Southern culture. This is especially true if they anticipate a move of God when they get there.

We anticipated, craved, and prepared for revival. Before I came to First Assembly, I asked God why I was supposed to come. He said, *I am going to send a revival there, and I want you to be a part of it.* Because the Holy Spirit spoke that into my heart, we prepared the church for an influx of new people. We not only prepared the building, but we also planned to win, gather, train, and send people. We expected God to bless new life with new growth, and that is exactly what happened.

Active Parenting

Evangelism must be intentional. The pastor and leadership team must set goals. How many people do you want to win to Christ this year? Under what structure and through what means and events will you find and reach these people? Perhaps you will coordinate

Evangelism must be intentional. The pastor and leadership team must set goals. How many people do you want to win to Christ this year?

several events that draw many people in so you can win them to Christ. But what will you do on a personal level? What will you challenge each member of your church to do personally? Many churches never attain that level of intentionality. Personal responsibility for the lost is not the heart of what they do.

We have ongoing training in personal evangelism and constantly motivate people to personal evangelism. We train altar workers how to pray with people at the altars. We teach people how to win the lost to Christ. Every year I preach a series of messages called *The Andrew Principle*. I point out that people are won through relationships. Sometimes

we have skits or dramas to model what we teach so people can see it in action.

Along with training we provide avenues through which our people can win people to Christ: sidewalk Sunday School, outreach evangelism, nursing home ministries, and prison ministries. When people are saved in these outreaches and come to our church, we bring them on the platform and celebrate. It is important for the pastor to publicly celebrate salvations.

Even when we plan big events for the community, we never lose sight of ministry to individuals. During Thanksgiving we rent a park, advertise our outreach, set up large tents, and feed people. We also give away 1,000 turkeys. We also do smaller events that incorporate different people's evangelism interests.

At our Fourth of July musical presentation, we have a living flag, as well as rides and games. This event attracts more than 20,000 people.

But we never lose sight of one-on-one ministry. Our people walk around handing out bottles of water and sharing Christ. As many people are saved through this ministry as are saved when we give an altar call after preaching the Word.

Baby Steps: Walking With Jesus

Evangelism is birthed out of a relationship with God. It is impossible to not evangelize someone if you walk close to Jesus. When you walk close to Christ, you will have the heart of Christ, and the heart of Christ is to win the lost. Pastors are responsible to create environments where their

Birthing a Move of

people can walk close to God, such as prayer meetings, times of discipleship, and times when individuals can see evangelism modeled so they are eager to participate.

Many ideologies and philosophies exist on how to conduct a church service and offer supportive church gatherings and activities. The main purpose for any church service is to equip saints. There is no better way to equip the saints than to model a life of worship and outreach.

In every service, even on Wednesday nights, we give altar calls. Altar calls mean more than appeals for

salvation. There are many ways to solidify what God is doing in people's lives. In every service we give people opportunity to receive Christ, to have prayer for spiritual and physical healing, or to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. When we pray we expect God to answer. This constant proactive communion with Christ is fueling our growth.

Every ministry in the church exists to win people to Christ. We teach our Sunday School teachers, Royal Rangers and Missionettes leaders, and youth workers how to give altar calls. The same people may

be attending these ministries each week, but you never know what has happened to them during the week.

Spirit Conceived, Spirit Empowered

We strongly emphasize the baptism in the Holy Spirit and its connection to evangelism. Every year we set goals for people who want to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. We believe God every year for at least 200 people in our congregation to receive the Baptism. We do that because the Holy Spirit makes us witnesses. If 200 people have the power of the Holy Spirit, we will have continuous witnessing for the kingdom of God. The church grows as people who are filled with the Holy Spirit share the gospel.

The Spirit touches all ages. Children in our church experience dramatic moves of God through their services. One Sunday morning about 250 children had their hands raised, many with tears streaming down their faces, praising God. Many of them received the Baptism. We have also seen the same impact in our Royal Rangers and Missionettes groups. During a bus ride home following a Missionettes retreat, the group of girls and sponsors began singing and praying. Of the 45 people who went, 13 girls received the baptism in the Holy Spirit on the bus. Some parents carried their children off the bus while their children were speaking in tongues.

My youth pastor invited me to speak to the youth. When I finished speaking, I prayed for some of the teens. I left a little before 9. An hour later, the young people were still praying. Two hundred and sixty high school students were seeking God and praying with their hands raised. You could hear the roar of their speaking in tongues. The entire service revolved around young people encountering God. It was not fun and games. Prayer

Motivating Evangelism

The motivating power for evangelism comes from the Holy Spirit. Believers need encouragement and training. In motivating believers for outreach, pastors cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit. Here are some things that are useful in accomplishing this task.

First, to motivate a congregation for evangelism, a pastor must strategically and regularly preach the Word regarding evangelism. Preaching on evangelism once or twice a year is not enough to keep a congregation focused on outreach. Successful motivation often requires repetition to move people.

Second, incorporating personal testimonies into services — both from pastoral leadership and congregation members — is an effective way of motivating evangelism. If leadership models evangelism in their everyday lives, they will have testimonies to share publicly.

Furthermore, the following two factors are also powerful motivators:

A response to Christ's sacrifice. To effectively evangelize, we need a realization that Christ died for us. Our Christian service is a logical and "reasonable" response to the sacrifice of our Lord (Romans 12:1, KJV). Paul took the Lord's sacrifice personally. This was the secret to Paul's powerful motivation to reach the unreached.

The work of the Spirit. Evangelism is primarily a work of the Holy Spirit. We are witnesses for Christ, but the Spirit is the One who draws people to Christ. The pastor who keeps his congregation focused on the Lord's sacrifice and the power of the Holy Spirit will be effective in inspiring his church in its mission of evangelizing the lost.



RANDY HURST, Springfield, Missouri

God

in the presence of God moved these teens to evangelism. That night 10 teens gave their lives to Christ.

Maturing Into the Miraculous

When God is rebirthing His work, it is never contained within the walls of the church. First Assembly is reaching out to our community in love. We give sacrificially to missions around the world and across the United States. The more we care for God's world,

When God is rebirthing His work, it is never contained within the walls of the church.

the more He blesses us and spurs us on to greater ministry. The result is an expectation for and experience of the miraculous.

Three of our high school seniors were at their public school and noticed their teacher was in pain during her lecture. During a break in the class, they approached her and asked what was wrong. She told them she had a migraine headache. They asked if they could lay their hands on her and pray quietly for the Lord to heal her headache. She agreed. The students prayed and immediately the migraine left. The teacher then went to the teachers' lounge and told her colleagues what had happened.

"I have cancer," one man said. "If that can happen to you, I'd like them to pray for me. I'll try anything."

So the teachers invited these students to come to school early the next morning so they could lay hands on this teacher. They began to pray for him. He went to the doctor the next Tuesday for a check-up. The doctor was amazed. The previous month's test had shown spreading cancer. Without even a full round of chemotherapy, the teacher was cancer free.

Reborn Churches Are Obedient Churches

All of us hit a wall now and then and lose our holy awe for the supernatural. This happens when we do not spend time with God. Pastors must commune with God and hear His voice every day. A pastor must be able to say, "I have been with God." It makes all the difference.

I spend about 2 hours every morning in prayer, and my staff joins me for

about an hour of that time. We take Friday off, but return on Saturday to pray from 6 to 7 p.m. as a church. We pray on Sunday from 7 to 8:15 a.m. before the early service. We pray as a church on Sunday from 5:15 to 5:45 p.m. Six days a week the staff prays together, and the leadership of the church prays together. But prayer is not enough. We need to be prepared to hear God speak and then act on what He tells us.

During a 2004 summer vacation I did some introspection. I asked the Lord about my ministry. At that time I had been in full-time ministry for 23 years. Because of His guidance and empowerment, we were able to accomplish everything the Lord had asked us to do. But I had not seen all the results I wanted to see. I read the Book of Acts again. My heart was stirred, and I asked God, "Why can't we have this?"

Like a thundering trumpet, the Spirit of the Lord asked me, *Will you pay the price to have it?*

This mandate changed me. I began to look for corners of my life that I could dedicate to the Lord in further preparation for new birth in my ministry and in our church. I decided

to quit playing golf for 4 months. The time that I would have spent playing golf I gave to prayer.

I am already seeing the change and the next wave of new birth in our midst. Recently, we had 1,500 people in church on a Wednesday night. We are experiencing the supernatural in ways we have never seen before. In every service someone is receiving Jesus as Savior. Miracles are shaking our lives.

I deeply desire that thousands of pastors would experience this same kind of breakthrough. But it only comes from birthing a fresh move of God. If a pastor does not get alone with God, he will never have opportunity to see God move in ways I have just described. Intimacy produces revelation, and revelation must be obeyed before there can be blessing. Many receive revelation, but they stop there. Obedience must accompany the revelation.

God gave Abraham a revelation. He said, "Go and sacrifice Isaac."

The Bible says that the next day Abraham took Isaac. As he was preparing to sacrifice his son, Isaac said, "We've got the fire. Where's the sacrifice?"

Abraham said, "The Lord will provide."

We know the story. The Lord became Jehovah-Jireh to Abraham. Because He provided for Abraham, we know He will provide for us as well. The revelation of God, when it is obeyed, not only blesses us and affects our lives, but it also affects many others.

God is waiting to do a new work in you, your church, and in your community. Obey Him. Then hold on tight because you will be caught up in a tornado of the Spirit's power. 🌀



RANDY VALIMONT, PH.D., is senior pastor of First Assembly of God in Griffin, Georgia.



Walking Toward

How one pastor walked his church toward the harvest one step at a time.

By J. Don George

When I arrived in Irving, Texas, in 1972, I had 17 years of ministry experience — 6 years as an evangelist and 11 years as a pastor. During my evangelistic travels, my wife, Gwen, and I had seen numerous churches touch their communities in a variety of ways. When I accepted the Irving pastorate, I asked God: *How shall I reach this city? More than 80 churches are in this community. There are also thousands of churches in the entire Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex. Which strategy of church growth do You want me to employ?*

It seemed the established churches with their great choirs, beautiful buildings, and polished programs had an advantage in reaching this area with the gospel. What should I do?

God clearly spoke to my spirit. He revealed to me that the existing churches had their place in His plan, but there were gaps in their outreach. He told me to reach out to the people no one else was reaching. God challenged my heart, and I accepted this challenge by faith.

I made a commitment to personally visit 500 homes every week. Each Monday morning I prepared 500 flyers and separated them into bundles of 100. I faithfully fulfilled my personal commitment to visit 100 homes each day, Monday through Friday.

During these visits, I talked in a personable manner that let people know I cared. Then quietly, but uncompromisingly, I pointed them to our church as a place where they could find hope through an encounter with Jesus Christ.

Walking Into Daily Life

My daily walks through Irving's neighborhoods put me in touch with people who were in the middle of everyday life. These walks could consume a large portion of my day, depending on how many people engaged me in conversation. Sometimes it took the entire day to visit 100 homes.

Despite what many people would have you think, personal evangelism is not rocket science. It does not require a Ph.D. in



the Harvest

psychology, or a college course in sociology or interpersonal communication. The greatest portion of personal evangelism is talking to people. If you talk to enough people, you will reach someone. I usually said: "I am a new pastor in town. There is a church in this city you may not know about. I want to tell you about this church. We are here to help you. Here is a flyer. We would love to see you in church Sunday."

At times people would engage me in conversation. When no one was home, I left a flyer in the door. Sometimes the response was a polite, "Thank you." Sometimes it was a polite (or not so polite), "Not interested." But if you talk to enough people, you will find the harvest.

My walking days turned into weeks and months. The months turned into 3 years. Our church saw the fruit of these walks. People began to visit our Sunday services. The next week I would seek out 500 new homes to visit. On Saturdays I contacted the people who had visited the church the previous Sunday.

My purpose in visiting Irving's neighborhoods was not to impress the people in our church or community. While I wanted to maximize our church's ministry, I did not make

500 weekly visits just to get our church on an artificial path to expansion. I visited homes because it was my personal way of reaching the city for God. I knew I could not depend on anyone else to do it. It was God's mandate to me.

With that philosophy in mind, I also started ministering in nursing homes. I found two in our city that would allow me to come on Wednesday mornings. Every Wednesday morning I went to those nursing homes and sang gospel songs, shared a devotional, and showed Christ's love to the people. Those trips seldom put anyone in our church's pews. The elderly did not put any money in our offering plates. But my visits still fulfilled the law of the harvest: If you sow seed, you will reap a harvest; if you sow seed, a crop will grow. Many times God has us sow seed in one area and reap a harvest in another. The bottom line is to fulfill the Great Commission through community involvement.

Walking as an Example

A pastor cannot lead anyone where he himself has not walked. One can attempt to drive people, but a pastor's

Walking Toward the Harvest

calling is not to drive people. Pastors are called to lead the flock of God. We need to walk where we expect people to follow. A pastor who is unwilling to commit to evangelism will be unable to lead others in evangelism. If we want people involved in personal evangelism, then we, as leaders, must be involved in personal evangelism. If we expect people to commit to a cause — evangelism, a community-wide outreach, or a ministry within the church — then we must make the commitment first. We must give people an example of involvement they can follow.

The pastor's example should not evaporate once the church begins to grow. Some pastors get down in the trenches on the front end of their church's development. Then, when they have built a congregation of 1,000 and have given life to a dozen ministries, they lose their desire for ground-level involvement. Some pastors think of themselves as *executives* and shift into a hands-off administrative mode.

As my responsibilities evolved over the years, I determined not to

lose my connection to the everyday community ministries within our church. If I traveled to preach a conference on a Thursday or Friday, I would fly home Friday night to attend our discipleship breakfast on Saturday morning. I wanted to be present every weekend for our Saturday bus ministry outreach because this outreach is a lifeline from our church to our community. I believe in staying involved in the church at the foundational level.

One cannot lead people until he has won their hearts. People will not follow a pastor on the strength of his résumé. You must win the people's hearts before they will follow you in winning your city to God. To win the love and loyalty of people requires time and performance. Loyalty is nontransferable. It does not matter how loved and respected a pastor may be in one city. When he moves to a different church in a different city, he must begin the process again.

People watch the shepherd. They observe what the shepherd does. When the pastor says, "We will do this," the

people measure his involvement in it. If he is committed to the ministry he is asking them to commit to, a spiritual bonding occurs. The people develop willingness to follow the shepherd. A group of believers is forged, and the gospel shakes a community.

Walking With the Spirit

If a pastor's life walk and ministry

walk are to be an inspiration to a congregation and community, his walk with the Spirit must be close and consistent. The Spirit walks with us through the mundane routines of life, and then suddenly points out to us opportunities that arise for God to do a work of miraculous proportions.

Think of the times Peter and John walked to the temple in Jerusalem. They were men of the Spirit, faithfully nurtured under the teaching of Christ and continually shaped by their reliance on God. This was a process. Jesus knew Peter's future ministry and worked in him to help him grow beyond his impulsive and impetuous nature, his rush to criticize, his reluctance to repent, and his bursts of anger. Although John is not referred to in the same way as Peter, he was among the disciples every time they argued over who was the greatest and tried to position himself as Jesus' favorite. John needed maturity too.

After the Holy Spirit dramatically transformed Peter and John in the Upper Room and endued them with power from on high, Peter became the spokesperson for the Church on the streets of Jerusalem. John ministered to the Early Church through his epistles and the Book of Revelation.

Peter and John walked to the temple many times during this entire transformation process. They passed a lame man each day as they went into the temple to pray. They never stopped to heal him until they had received the endowment — the power of God — during the outpouring in the Upper Room. That day they were changed. Later, when they visited the temple, they reached out to the lame man, took him by the hand, ministered healing to him, raised him up, and set him free (Acts 3:1–10).

The power of Pentecost equips

©2008 Jonny Hawkins



"That happened while you were witnessing? Well, at least you got your foot in the door."

Christians for evangelism, gives passion to believers, and gives marching orders to the Church. It is foolish to think that a believer can be effective in evangelism without the power of God's Spirit indwelling every area of his life.

Walking with the Spirit makes the difference between just another day at the office writing a sermon and a powerful, personal encounter with God that gives life to your message. Walking in the Spirit makes the difference between slogging through a list of visitation appointments and a personal encounter with God that gives divine energy in reaching people in their homes, in the hospital, and at the supermarket.

The pastor who walks with the Spirit does not need to walk fast or leap through hoops. He does not need grandiose programs or six-figure budgets. He just needs to listen for the still, small voice of God that leads him.

Walking With Mentors

A pastor who is walking toward a great harvest will walk with people who have been on the journey longer

— people whose godly wisdom he cherishes. Many godly men have benefited my life and ministry.

I learned a great deal from my dad. As he mentored me, I felt like I was in Bible school. I served in my dad's church because he was a wonderful shepherd. For 6 years I served as an evangelist and learned a great deal from the pastors where I preached. I always tried to learn from the most successful pastors.

As I observed, I learned many things to do. I also learned many things not to do. Many churches that remain stagnant do not grow because the pastor is doing the wrong things, such as mismanaging people. The pastor may be conflict-oriented with a pugilistic spirit rather than showing love, forgiveness, and acceptance. Too often, the pastor's idea is: *It is my way or the highway. If you cannot hack it, get your jacket.*

If only pastors would trust the power of the gospel and stop relying on human initiative. The gospel produces results. The law of the harvest is: When you sow seed, you reap a harvest.

I did some things in my first

pastorate that I should not have done. I used the wrong motivation one year as I encouraged people to pay tithes. I made it difficult for people who were not paying tithes. The result was some people left the church. I quickly learned not to do that again. I have learned to say, as Tommy Barnett says, "You have got to enlarge your circle of love." You need to keep reaching out to people in love and acceptance.

During 10 years of pastoring in Plainview, Texas, our yearly average attendance was never more than 150 people. I understand what pastors go through when pastoring in small towns. I understand how difficult it is to get visitors in the door and how tough it is to correct improper assumptions in a community concerning a church. There are many reasons why churches do not grow. Many pastors labor in tough fields. Nevertheless, I learned much through those experiences.

As much as I have valued everything I learned from my mentors, I never tried to mimic their ministry. It is a mistake to copy another pastor, or duplicate the methodology of

▶▶ Modeling Personal Evangelism

Evangelism begins with pastoral leadership. Before a pastor, youth pastor, or children's pastor can motivate people to personal evangelism, each leader must first model evangelism. Luke opens the Book of Acts with an instructive phrase about our Lord: "Jesus began both to do and teach" (KJV). The order is significant. The tendency of education is to teach first and then expect students to do what they have been taught. Jesus did first, then He taught. Our Maker is our Model. How does pastoral leadership model the ministry of evangelism?

In the home. Modeling a lifestyle of evangelism must begin in the home. Evangelizing and discipling our children are a major part of the ministry God gave us.

Before the congregation. A pastor can model evangelism in his church by giving regular public invitations to salvation. Even when no one responds to a salvation invitation, people in the congregation witness their pastor's concern, passion, and commitment to reach the lost.

In the community. Evangelistic pastors can make a personal impact on people outside the church. Building relationships

with nonbelievers in the community creates opportunities to share the gospel.

In the pastor's world. A direct correlation exists between a pastor's heart for the lost in his own community and his vision for the lost of the world. When a congregation can observe a pastor's burden for the world's lost multitudes, it affects how believers view the lost in their own community.



RANDY HURST, Springfield, Missouri



▶ Two Scenes from BEMA Seat

Scene One

Word spread quickly that Pastor Kurt had just crossed the River Glorious. As the Lord looked on approvingly, he was mobbed by those whose lives he had affected during his lifetime. First to meet him was Jim, once a hopeless drunk who had been restored to sanity through Kurt's patient efforts. Sally was close by as well. She had been the church troublemaker and never realized — until her entrance into heaven — that it had been her pastor's constant intercession that had brought her to repentance. Billy was there to thank his pastor for taking time to mentor him through his awkward teen years. The line of people stretched into the distance — each one grateful because this man had valued them individually, in one form or another laying down his life for them.

Over and over again, one could hear Kurt protesting against their displays of affection: "You give me too much credit; it was the Lord alone who saved you."

"Yes," would come the reply, "but you were the one person concerned enough to pray for me, to take time to help me, to tell me the truth." Then came the inevitable shower of hugs and kisses.

Eventually, having escaped this outpouring of love, Kurt was brought before the Lord. What he did for each person was shown before a vast multitude of angelic beings and others who had been redeemed. "There is joy in the presence of the angels

of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10). That joy and gratitude was now directed toward Kurt as if he were a soldier returning home to a hero's welcome. In some inexplicable way, every person he had cared for on earth was now a jewel in a crown he would enjoy forevermore.

Scene Two

Like Kurt, Pastor Ben also found himself standing before the Lord. He was elated when an angel informed him that his spiritual biography would be played out before the host of heaven — heroes from the Old Testament, the apostles, great missionaries, martyrs, and saints from all ages. It was clear all were anxious to see what victories he had won for Christ.

As the scenes of his life played out before that great cloud of witnesses, a horrifying and inescapable reality emerged: his entire 30 years of ministry had all been for self. In that moment, he saw a lifetime of service in the kingdom of God that had produced no fruit, no real results, and no eternal rewards. It was all for nothing.

What stood out was that he had been far more concerned about building a successful ministry — one that gained him prestige and worldly honor — than he had been about the precious people who had been entrusted into his care.

The worst aspect of Ben's experience was seeing the deep disappointment spread across every face — especially the Face that had been spit upon and beaten for the sake of others.

At that moment, a flash of fire burst forth from the Throne and burned up his years of work. Nothing was left to show for his life's efforts but a pile of ashes ... nothing but a pile of ashes.

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someone else. It is a mistake because God does not give every person the same talents. In fact, God has created us all different by divine design. God has a unique plan for every preacher, pastor, and man. To copy what someone else has done may fail. When you consider the fact every church, city, and culture is different, you realize that to fulfill the Great Commission in your harvest field your ministry needs to be different.

A pastor needs to observe what successful pastors do, and then glean principles he can use rather than exact methods he can copy. The successful pastor utilizes principles. For example, one pastoral principle is to walk where you expect the people to walk. Another principle is that the infilling of the Holy Spirit gives empowerment for ministry. Empowerment enables believers to be effective in evangelism. Pastors need to apply principles, but

they need to prayerfully and carefully choose their methods.

Walking With Disciples

A great principle that has shaped my ministry is this: A pastor must develop disciples, and he must develop them through associating with them. This is how Jesus developed His disciples. This principle is the inverse of the mentoring principle I have followed. Because God has brought people into my life to share

▶ THE PASTOR AS SOUL WINNER

It is easy to assume the busy life of pastoral duties excuses a pastor from being a soul winner. By virtue of his position, a minister has unique opportunities to evangelize and needs to stay sensitive to the timing and prompting of the Holy Spirit. Following are a few opportunities I have had in my pastoral ministry.

1. A man in our city whose business supplied the furniture for our new Christian school said to me, "If you ever take a trip, I would like to go with you. I will pay my way." Shortly after that conversation I was invited to be a guest on a national Christian television program. I took this man with me. As we were driving home, I asked, "David, have you ever invited the Lord Jesus Christ

into your heart?" We had been talking about what it means to be a Christian.

He said, "No I haven't."

I replied "Would you like to now?" We pulled off the Interstate and he accepted Christ as his Savior.

2. The mayor of the city where I pastored loved music and often attended our musical presentations. On one occasion we did a patriotic musical and invited him to sing a solo with the choir. On a subsequent Sunday when giving the invitation, he and his wife received Christ and made a public confession of their newfound faith in Christ.

3. Several ladies in our church had unsaved husbands. I preached a sermon on 2 Peter 3:1-5 and gave an altar call

for the wives of unsaved husbands. One hundred and ten ladies came forward. After praying with them, I declared that this would be the year of the unsaved husband. I asked the congregation to invite these men into their homes and do things to build friendships. Thirty-eight men made a public decision for Christ as a result. A year later we had a night of rejoicing. Seven couples came to the platform. Each wife shared what life was like before her husband's conversion. Each husband shared what life was like after he came to Christ. What an evening of rejoicing.



ERNEST J. MOEN, former Illinois District Superintendent, lives in Sun City West, Arizona.

their wisdom and experience and bless my journey into ministry, I owe it to others to offer the same encouragement and guidance at God's leading.

A major part of my spiritual responsibility is to disciple young people to go forth from our church and do a great work in the Kingdom. One of my goals is to disciple at least 10 individuals who will build bigger churches and do a greater work for God than we are doing here. God has already stretched that growth beyond the 10 people I envisioned. There are perhaps a dozen young men in ministry right now who are growing ministries that I believe will expand beyond the dimensions of my ministry.

I cannot pinpoint exactly when discipleship began to impact my ministry. I was at my Calvary Church about 10 years when it dawned on me that discipleship was what I needed to be doing. Since I have employed that principle, it has touched everything I do. I have invested myself in training young people, sending them out, and motivating them to go with vision and passion.

While I have diligently helped them understand how we do ministry at Calvary, I have also pushed them to discover the plan of outreach that God has for each of them in their harvest field.

Walking Without Tiring

I share my story with pastors who are looking for ways to maximize their church's outreach — regardless of their church's size. Numerous Assemblies of God pastors serve in small churches. They wonder: *How can I do this? How can our church, with limited resources, have a measurable impact on our community?* I will never forget asking God these same questions when I first came to Irving.

The law of the harvest promises that if you sow what you have, you will reap according to God's generosity. Today, our church partners with ministries such as Convoy of Hope. Our buses bring in children and young people from across Irving. Our mobile evangelistic teams take the gospel into neighborhoods. We are excited about ministry projects that allow us to give away bicycles, dolls, and basketballs as

we impact thousands of children and young people with the gospel.

Although we were not doing any of these things in 1972, God already had them in focus. God has great plans for every church He is building. A pastor might say, "We cannot do ministry A because we do not have enough money." Fine. Find ministry B or ministry C. Find the outreach God has for your community. There is always a way to reach people with the love of God even when resources are limited. Every large church started as a small church.

God is blessing Calvary Church, but His blessing came when we found a way to reach the city through personal engagement. We walked toward our harvest one step at a time. We continue to walk just as steadily and just as committed to hearing the voice of the Spirit. Are you ready for your journey? 🙏



J. DON GEORGE, D.D., is senior pastor of Calvary Church in Irving, Texas, and an executive presbyter with the General Council of the Assemblies of God.

Let Love

Live

The principle of Christ's love transformed Timberline Church's entire approach to ministry.

By Dary Northrop

In 1986, Bonnie and I came to Fort Collins, Colorado. At 28, I was elected senior pastor of a 65-year-old church. We were young and had never been senior pastors. A young pastor and a church with a multigenerational heritage can create a recipe for conflict.

But we did not experience conflict. Why? Because our people loved us the way we were. They accepted our ministry and us. As we started loving each other, it became a good marriage. God saw our hearts and their hearts, and molded us together as a church family.

Nearly two decades later, God has used that foundational principle of love to grow Timberline Church and its members. Our church theme is *Let Love Live*. Love has shaped my entire approach to ministry.

The more I reflect on the love of Christ, the more I am convinced that it is the single greatest tool for breaking down barriers. Christ's love draws people from every corner of society to Timberline. Christ's love will bring people to your church. Christ's love will guide you in how to relate to those people until they fully discover His love for themselves.

Love Invites

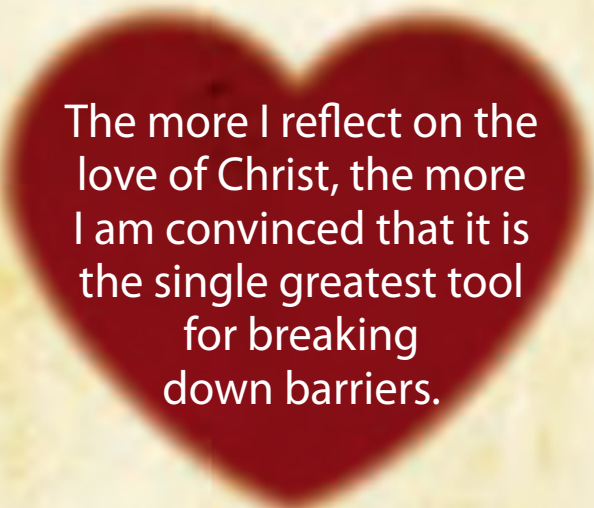
One of the first things you will discover about Christ's love is that it attracts people into your church who may make you uncomfortable unless you are consistently operating in love.

We had not been at Timberline very long before a young woman attended our service and was radically saved. She was a stripper. She found the Lord in spite of our best efforts. Her friends came to her water baptism, and they found the Lord. These were not the girls next door that

many churches attract. Soon they were joined by all kinds of people — people with body piercings, people with tattoos — people whose appearance seemed to run counter to what we thought appropriate for a church.

These people did not seem to fit into our Sunday School classes or small groups. None of the curriculum we were using worked for them. At first, we were unable to effectively minister to these new believers. We could not connect with their world, and

that opened our eyes. So we determined we would change. Out of that determination our mission and theme, *Let Love Live*, was born. Those three words gave us the power to tell our visitors that no matter who they are or where they come from, we will let love live.



The more I reflect on the love of Christ, the more I am convinced that it is the single greatest tool for breaking down barriers.

We discovered that God's love is alive and well. Christians often put God's love in a box and try to define it through prejudicial filters. When you love people the way they are, even before they change, you value them as God's creation. That kind of love changes your perspective. You begin to see their God-given value.

This kind of love is the root of evangelism. People want true, authentic relationships in which they can be vulnerable and transparent.

The most effective way to share the gospel is through friendships. Strangers leading strangers to the Lord is becoming more unlikely in our culture. We teach our people to journey with the lost, love them where they are, become their friends without strings attached or targeting them for evangelism. The lost need to know that a believer's friendship does not hinge on a salvation decision. If they never came to the Lord, the friendship will continue.

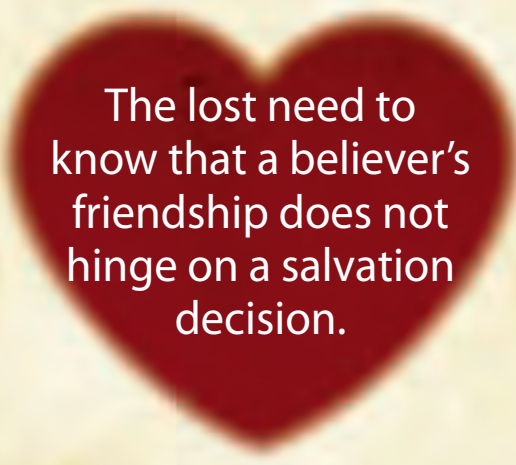
We want our lost friends to realize that they do not need to lead a double life or hide the things that bind them. Because I am a pastor, people sometimes hide their cigarette behind them when they see me coming. That is embarrassing for me. I want to tell them, "Please don't hide your addiction from me."

The church is a place where we bring our addictions, not hide them. We have ashtrays outside our church because some people smoke before they come in. Their smoking is the least of our worries. We want to love them as they are and let the Holy Spirit change them. We catch the fish; God cleans the fish.

I live out this principle in my relationships. My prayer is that some of my non-Christian friends can say,

"Dary is my best friend."

The church has hidden behind the scriptural command to be separate from the world and has forgotten that the focus of that command is to separate ourselves from sinful lifestyles and separate ourselves to God in service. While we are serving God and living like Jesus, we are to reach out to the lost with the same love and compassion Christ showed. Jesus spent time with sinners. It is an amazing thing to say that Jesus ate with sinners; it is even more amazing to me that



The lost need to know that a believer's friendship does not hinge on a salvation decision.

sinners wanted to eat with Jesus.

I joined Rotary. I go skiing with pagans. I dine with people who order drinks at dinner. Believers need to go to the Christmas party at their workplaces. They need to be involved in their city's life. They can join the city council or run for office. I want our church to release believers to go where lost people are and love them where they are.

Love Is Not a Sales Pitch

When we connect with unsaved people, they need to see we are genuine. Sometimes our presentation of the gospel is like receiving unsolicited phone calls at dinnertime. Most people are not interested in talking with someone they do not know who has something to sell. At

times, Christians are guilty — even when their motivation is their love for God — of viewing the gospel as something to sell, or at least to give away. But pastors need to let their preaching and teaching allow people to journey into their relationship with God.

This is a big shift from some of the old paradigms. Some people need to take time to discover God. In fact, God tends to work with many people over time to draw them to himself. We have seen people take a 3-, 4-, or 6-month journey. They faithfully come to church, and even give in the offering before they accept Christ.

We need to encourage the lost in their journey. When they reach the point where they can say, "I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God and died for my sins," this needs to be a natural step instead of a leap over some great, dark wall.

Some preachers are good at talking, but not good at listening. The unchurched need a pastor who has good listening skills.

What the lost have to say to us will change what we have scripted to say to them. People rarely ask the questions we are prepared to answer.

When we do talk, we need to create an atmosphere in our church where nonbelievers feel comfortable. I do this all the time, and I did not know it was unique until a few pastors mentioned it to me. When I welcome people to a service, I often say: "We welcome those of you who have not made a decision to follow Christ. We want you to ask questions. We want you to journey with us. Think through what we believe in. We hope you can learn to understand the claims of Christ for yourself, and not just accept them from us. Let God reveal himself to you. We are glad you are here. Make yourself at home."

I recommend that kind of approach

for pastors, even if they are pastoring a small church where they know everyone and do not see any nonbelievers in the audience. Doing this changes the attitude of the congregation toward nonbelievers and prepares them to love lost visitors unconditionally.

Every weekend people say to me, "I am not a Christian yet, but I am thinking about it." They share where they are in their journey and ask for prayer. They may share a specific prayer request. I am learning how rare that kind of interaction is in many of our churches because the atmosphere does not allow it.

Today is the day of salvation; but, when we press people for a response, we can ruin what the Holy Spirit is doing. I want people to understand for themselves that the Spirit is prompting them to think about spiritual matters. I want to help them on their journey by encouraging and strengthening them. I laugh with people, cry with them, and get involved in their lives.

Does that mean I avoid giving altar calls for salvation in our church? No. I usually offer this salvation invitation: "Today, as I wrap this up, I want to give those who feel God knocking on their hearts opportunity to respond. You know you are separated from God. But today, by faith, you want to accept Christ into your life. I will lead you in a prayer, and I invite you to respond if you believe it is your time. If you seriously mean it, your life will totally change. If you will pray this prayer with me by faith, slip your hand up right now, wherever you are."

Hands go up every service. Sometimes people respond after attending 3 months, but some respond on their first Sunday. I do not ask people to stand or come forward. I lead them in prayer where they are seated. Then we give them a Bible and information to help get them involved in discipleship.

Love Reaches Out

When Christ's love is alive in a church, it focuses on the Great Commission

and looks for ways to connect with the community. Some pastors feel that outreach must always be connected

Mobilizing Evangelism

Mobilizing and equipping members of a congregation in evangelism, especially personal evangelism, is one of a pastor's most important biblical responsibilities.

Personal Evangelism — the #1 Priority

Any Christian who wants to be active in personal witness needs to share from his own experience with nonbelievers, avoid religious arguments and controversies, find opportune ways to invite people to church, and seize opportunities to pray with nonbelievers.

Above all, pastors must continually remind believers that God is the One who saves people. The Holy Spirit is the One who convicts of sin. We partner in the work God is doing in people's lives.

By All Means

Most people find it easier to practice personal evangelism when presented with a simple plan or program in which to participate. Following are a few examples and suggestions.

- *Ministries to meet specific spiritual needs.* These ministries focus on groups such as single parents, the divorced, or the unemployed.
- *Community prayer ministry.* This ministry focuses on the specific prayer needs of the neighborhood surrounding the church.
- *Special sermon series.* Preaching a special sermon series is a productive approach to evangelism.
- *Outreach events.* These may include evangelistic dramas or concerts.

While we need to prioritize the most effective means of evangelism and those that have the greatest long-term results, we also need to be open to all means of reaching the spiritually lost.



RANDY HURST, Springfield, Missouri



Let Love Live

with an event. Outreach needs to connect with people's everyday lives.

We try to conduct as many funerals as possible involving families not affiliated with a church. Funeral directors call us, and we gladly help because we know we will minister to families. That allows us as a church to reach people going through grief and sorrow with love. We try to do the same with weddings. We recognize that we cannot marry just anybody. But whenever you can, create an atmosphere in which a young couple starts a lifelong relationship with a church's blessing. You have given that new family a wonderful gift.

We look for nonchurch events we can help sponsor. We are a polling place for our precinct. We allow the city to hold their functions in our building. We have attorneys, a weekly realtors group, and other public activities that hold meetings in our facilities. We do this as a ministry to the community. We only charge for the cost of cleanup, maintenance, and any labor such as running the sound system.

The coffee shop café in our church has a huge impact. People who have never been to a church service meet regularly with their group and eat lunch in our café.

Our building has not caved in or gotten struck by lightning because we use it for these functions. I believe God is pleased. The lost are becoming familiar with our church. They realize, *We can come into this church, and people are nice here.* Before long, they come to a church service.

We have outdoor patios where people can sit and listen to the service. They can also watch the service on a monitor upstairs if they are not comfortable coming into the sanctuary. It is important, however, for people to have opportunity to engage in the life of the church. I want to give them every opportunity to do so. That is the spirit of our church.

I am not against organized events and outreaches; however, I want those projects to supplement the everyday focus we maintain. We sponsor an Adopt-a-Family project at Christmas.

We ask for names of people in our city who have needs. Over the years we have adopted thousands of families. In fact, we are the go-to place for our city. When the Salvation Army partners with the local Santa Cops, they work from our list. Families are not required to visit our church to receive these gifts. The people in our congregation buy gifts for their

chosen family and deliver them to their home with no strings attached. They simply tell this hurting family, "We love you, and we want this to be a great Christmas for you."

The week of the Fourth of July we hold a huge event for our community. We honor military and medical personnel, along with our law enforcement agencies. We hold a big rally and thank them for all they do for our community.

One key to loving and reaching your city is to learn what the community sees as its needs. Beyond our own food pantry, we contribute to the city food bank. We tell city officials, "We do not want one homeless person in this town. We will support this shelter if you build it."

We ask, "What do you need? How can we help?" We have volunteered with Habitat for Humanity. We gave money to help build our senior citizens center. It is not a Christian-care facility, but you will see our church's name on the plaque in that facility as well as on plaques throughout Fort Collins because we give to high schools, junior high schools, and other community-building projects to support the vision they have to reform the city.

I believe giving to the community is part of being a good steward. It excites people to see local needs being met. At a recent missions banquet we gave \$50,000 to agencies in our community to say, *We love you. We embrace you. We believe in what you are doing.* When a church reaches out to its community and helps in tangible ways, people realize that the church is vital to the community. They will believe in you and will listen when you talk.

Love Touches the World

Some people might wonder if Timberline is so focused on Fort

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"Pastor, I'm not saying you do everything wrong. To prove it, if you ever do something right, I'll be the first to say so."

Collins that we have forgotten the rest of the world. The Great Commission starts in Jerusalem and Judea, and we honor that in every expression of our ministry. But it also extends to the ends of the earth. We believe we are responsible to reach the world. We take that responsibility seriously.

Missions awareness starts in our sanctuary. We support and feature many missionaries. We present 5-minute spotlights to make our people aware of places in need around the globe. We show a great deal of video footage. Assemblies of God World Missions has some excellent material. We also produce some of our own.

We have the rich and poor, young and old, traditional and contemporary worshiping together.

We promote a missions mindset throughout our building. As our missions convention approaches every year, we place pictures, banners, posters, and video screens around our church so people can learn about different places in the world.

Missions involvement extends to the trips we organize. We often schedule a dozen missions trips each year. We take medical teams and worship teams from our church to countries where we partner with Assemblies of God missionaries. We have seen the powerful effects of taking people to a ministry site. But

we cannot spend all of our money to take people there. We need to give money to help the missionaries.

Once you develop a missions mindset in your church, you only need to take people to a ministry site one time. When they experience missions firsthand, they automatically become missions givers. They see that our missionaries do a great job with the funds we send.

We never apologize when we take missions offerings. Our people understand that when we give in a missions offering, we excitedly look forward to how God will use it. We challenge people to give in each offering if possible. This is part of being a Christian with a godly worldview.

Love Has Many Faces

We constantly promote — what I call the *DNA of Timberline* — the diversity of our city that is represented in our church. We have the rich and poor, young and old, traditional and contemporary worshiping together. We want Timberline to be an environment where differences exist without

getting in the way.

During the week various interest groups from our church meet. For example, we have cyclists, motorcycle groups, knitting groups, and many more. Small groups are great catalysts to bring people together to journey in their faith with God.

When I look over our auditorium during worship, I see someone in his 80s sitting alongside a 21-year-old, and both are worshiping God. There will be elements of the worship service that will appeal more to the 80-year-old while other elements will appeal more to the 21-year-old.

But each element is valuable.

We always sing one hymn on Sunday because there are great hymns that need to be sung. We do not sing hymns to please the older generation. We sing hymns because the younger generation needs to value the power in those hymns. We need this diversity.

We do not have many Hispanics in our town, but we do have a large representation attending our church. Many do not speak English, but they sit through the service because they want what God is doing among us. We now supply headphones with interpreters.

Democrats and Republicans worship together at Timberline. We do not tell people who to vote for. We say, "How many of you agree that we need to vote and pay attention to what is happening in our culture and our city?" That is how I present the issues whenever an election draws near.

I believe in the power of diversity. I often say, "You might not like this style, but it is not about you; it is about God. What does God like? God likes diversity. Look at the world. Look at whom He created. Let's not be self-centered in our preferences. Let's release other people and honor other people. Let's respect diversity."

Here is the crux of the matter. There must be unity in the body of Christ, but unity is not uniformity. Unity is diversity with cooperation. Unity is the life of the church, and that sets us apart at Timberline. Christ has given us boundless love for one another amidst the incredible diversity He has created.

Let love live. ☺



DARY NORTHROP is senior pastor of Timberline Church, Fort Collins, Colorado.

I recently celebrated 52 years of preaching the gospel. I have been in awe and humbled by what I have seen God do in those years. But an amazing fact is this: In the last 4 years I have seen more people saved; God has supplied more funding; and I have witnessed more signs, wonders, and miracles than in the previous 48 years. I attribute this to God's multiplication factor.

The Early Church started with addition. But in the Book of Acts a transition took place. The church went from addition to multiplication. The Early Church exploded in growth. I believe explosive growth is God's will for His church today.

Like any math you study in school, God's math rests on His axioms.

Axiom 1: Start With One

When people attend our Pastors School at First Assembly and see our 230 ministries in operation, they sometimes become overwhelmed. They think: *I cannot do that. I don't have the know-how or the money. I'm not a motivational person.*

My answer: "Choose one thing." One is the simplest number. In Davenport, Iowa, that simple number pointed to bus ministry, and I became an authority. I learned, traveled, listened to all the speakers, and became Mr. Bus Guy.

Today, I understand a struggling pastor's heartbreak. I have been there. I know what he is dealing with, and I know the problems he faces. While bus ministry is not as

A pastor does not have a New Testament church unless he is adding to the church daily.

big a part of our church today as it was years ago, it was the spark that got things going.

One is also the number of people God needs to start a ministry. In the beginning, the pastor needs to take the lead in the church. Later, God will raise up other members in the congregation to start more ministries along side of him. But if the pastor does not take the lead, others will

not learn how to begin the multiplication process.

When we were setting up our home group meetings, I took the lead by writing the curriculum, then teaching it. Today, congregation members do practically everything in my church. I have been here 26 years, and I have the most loyal and dedicated staff. I now spend my time on focused projects, such as the Dream Center in Los Angeles, California. People who look at First Assembly believe I must have great responsibilities here. They cannot imagine where I find time to take on anything else. But it is easier for me to pastor today than it was in the early years. Why? Because I learned to start with addition and let God transform it into multiplication. Students learn to add before they begin memorizing multiplication tables. The same is true in ministry.

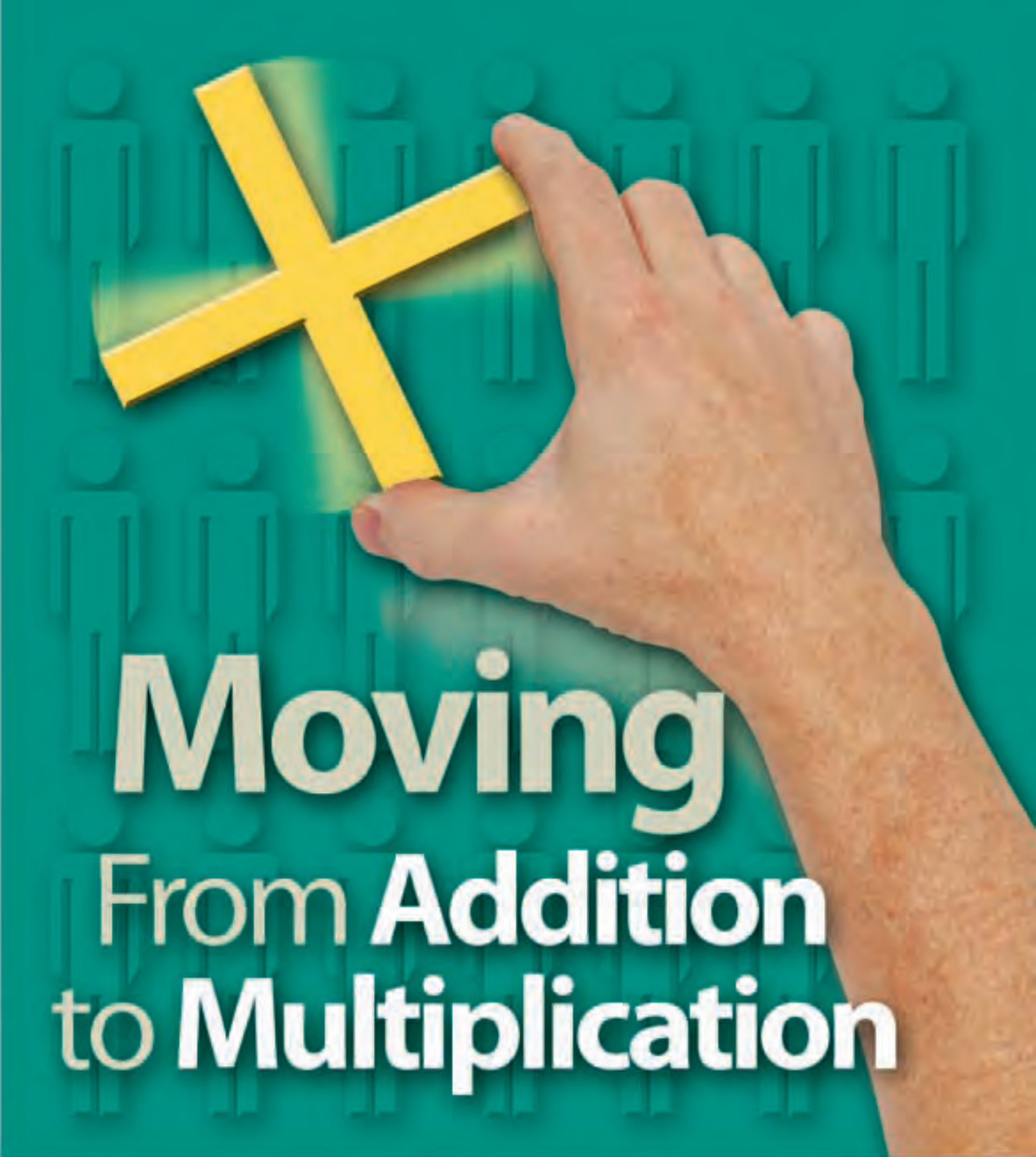
Axiom 2: God's Addition Is Daily Addition

A pastor does not have a New Testament church unless he is adding to the church daily. I have been committed to doing whatever was necessary to serve God to bring about daily growth. I do not distinguish growth based on the types of people who come into our church.

When I was in Davenport, Iowa, I took a great deal of heat in the beginning. People said of our bus ministry, "Well, it's just a bunch of kids." They claimed we were promoting *surface evangelism*, and that it was just a numbers game. But I saw that God was saving people and adding them to His church.

When you are partnering with God to add to His church, you do not base your ministry on money or any other tangible factor. Many people started a bus ministry, and then quit when gas prices went up. When I came to Phoenix, Arizona, gas prices were at an all-time high. But when God spoke to my heart about the need to reach inner-city children and families, we bought buses and began to bring them in. We did not continue our bus ministry because it was cheap, but because it was winning people to Christ. Bus ministry will fail if the church merely sees it as transportation. Go into it as evangelism; value people; and expect God to add to His church.

When you understand that God adds to His church, you do not feel compelled to direct every sermon to the lost in the hope you can pull them in. I rarely preach a message directed to unsaved people. My sermon is usually

A hand holding a yellow cross against a teal background with a grid of small human figures.

Moving From Addition to Multiplication

Nine axioms to create growth in your church

By Tommy Barnett

to believers, but I always give an invitation to the lost.

You cannot build a great church by just preaching hellfire and brimstone. You need to build up people. If I develop good fruit trees by speaking life into our people, they will witness during the week. They will bring hurting people to church. If you preach strictly to the lost every service, you will lose your congregation.

Axiom 3: Moving to Multiplication Means Getting God's Attention

As I have looked for ways to multiply our effectiveness, I have prayed: *Lord,*

Thousands of people hear the gospel and accept Christ because we live by the principle: Find a need and fill it; find a hurt and heal it.

how can I get Your attention? If I can get Your attention, I will get Your blessing.

When you study Scripture, ask yourself how people in the Bible got God's attention. When a sparrow fell, it had God's attention (Matthew 10:29). When a widow gave sacrificially, she had God's attention (Mark 12:41-44). When a nursing baby cries, it has God's attention. Even the raven — the scroungiest, dirtiest, filthiest bird — has God's attention.

It occurred to me that if I would bring the hurting people in this city to my church, I would have God's attention. I learned that if I take care of what God says is a need, God will take care of my need. Money follows ministry. You do not get the money and then do ministry. You do ministry, and God sends the money.

Axiom 4: Fill Needs, Heal Hurts, Experience Growth

As I drove through Phoenix during my early years, God started speaking to my heart. I noticed that no one was reaching the inner city. I have built my church on finding a need and filling it, finding a hurt and healing it. So I began to reach out with the buses again. We bought four, went to 10, then 40, and the number kept growing.

When people come to First Assembly, we present the gospel. But people come with hungry stomachs as well as hungry souls. We have four buses painted black with flames that we call our SWAT buses. Each week we use these buses to

pick up about 250 to 300 people who would not otherwise attend church. They come early because we provide a meal for them. Then they attend church that night.

On a recent Thanksgiving, we gave away 3,000 frozen turkeys. The church did not buy them; our people donated them. That morning, more than 2,000 people came to the altar to accept Christ. We sent another 1,000 turkeys to the L.A. Dream Center, where they gave away 2,000 turkeys.

We also use our buses to bring in 10,000 children for our annual Christmas Sunday morning outreach. Each child receives a gift provided by the people of our church. To fill needs and heal hurts in a community, everyone in the church needs to be involved.

One man in our church donated 20,000 new bicycles to give to

children. One lady looks for sales all year and buys \$20 presents. She stores them in her garage until our Christmas outreach. Another man owns a chain of exercise facilities called Pure Fitness. He advertised that people bringing canned goods to Pure Fitness could get a free training session. He has collected 150,000 cans of food to give to hurting people.

During our Christmas Sunday morning outreach, the church gives each child a new bicycle, and parents receive a huge bag of food. The first service is generally filled with church members. In our second service, we might have approximately 4,000 illegal immigrants in attendance. In this service I preach through an interpreter. The mission field has come to America. Thousands of people hear the gospel and accept Christ because we live by the principle: Find a need and fill it; find a hurt and heal it.

This is not just a principle we practice at Thanksgiving, Christmas, or Easter. It is a principle we live by all year.

Axiom 5: Your Service Is a Multiplication Engine

Meeting needs means adapting to new needs. This is especially true in the changing spiritual dynamics concerning what people will receive in a church service. I could easily say that the kind of music and ministry I am accustomed to and that has fueled years of growth at our church needs to remain the norm. If they worked powerfully then, should they not continue to be effective today? But people change, and so do their needs.

I was slow to change, but I realized the folly of my ways when I went to Los Angeles. As I watched God move dramatically at the Dream Center, I realized that He wants to move the same way in Phoenix. If we want to reach the younger generation, we need

to use the latest tools God has given us.

Our music and church are now relevant to our age. In our early service, 250 Master's Commission students provide the music, and it is more like the music at Brooklyn Tabernacle. The second service features our church choir and has Hillsong-style music mixed with older songs.

The energy does not evaporate after the morning service. Our Sunday night attendance is now larger than our Sunday morning attendance. We have had a Sunday night explosion, and the community is taking notice. *Phoenix Magazine*, one of the most subscribed-to magazines in town, printed a front-page article entitled, "Phoenix After Dark." They listed the Top 20 Hot Spots in Phoenix after dark. Among the nightclubs and other hot spots, they included a picture of our church and described our worship. They wrote about what is happening every Sunday night.

The crowds come because we invite them. Sunday afternoons at 4:30, our people gather in the parking lot. We load our buses and go out into the streets to find people in need. Our people hand out flyers and say, "Hey, come to church tonight. This is happening." We always have something planned that will excite people. We tell them, "We'll be back to pick you up in an hour."

Every bus returns to the church full. We run the buses all over town. A crowd attracts a crowd. Our people do not feel threatened or overwhelmed by the large masses of hurting people who come because they have a heart for the hurting. When I give the altar call on Sunday nights, we may have 300 to 400 people accept Christ.

Axiom 6: The Holy Spirit Is the Great Multiplier

I have always been Pentecostal. The

Holy Spirit provides the power that brings multiplication.

On Sunday nights when I give an altar call and crowds come forward to accept Christ, I do not stop with an invitation to accept Christ as Savior. Why stop there when God offers so much more? We introduce people to the power of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of energizing and transforming their lives.

I tell people, "If you have not received the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues, you are missing something. I want everyone who

wants to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit to walk through these doors and meet with one of the men in our church. He will explain to you how to receive the Baptism and pray with you."

Some people come from nominal churches and say, "We hear that your Sunday night service is for people who would like to be baptized in the Holy Spirit."

Every week, at least 75 people come forward to receive the Baptism; 95 percent of them receive. The Holy Spirit continually fills our people. That is the way God designed His church to function.

Maintaining Evangelism in the Church

Regaining lost momentum in evangelism and church growth is harder than establishing it initially. Maintaining evangelism in a church involves exhorting and teaching church members to establish and maintain long-term relationships with nonbelievers. Believers need to be there for people in times of need, especially in major crises. A relationship with a nonbeliever may require many years of nurturing before the Holy Spirit opens the door to leading this person from an acquaintance with the gospel to making a life-changing decision for Christ.

These four characteristics can help make a church more effective in *reaching* and *retaining* people:

A church of the Word. The seed for planting the harvest is always the gospel.

A church of the manifest presence

of the Holy Spirit. Even nonbelievers can sense that a Pentecostal church is different.

A church on a mission. The church that focuses on reaching the lost in its community and the world is a place where people can find their reason for being.

A church that loves. Many people will stay in a church if they can find just one friend.

Evangelism is an activity that a pastor can model, motivate, mobilize, and maintain. The Holy Spirit knows how to reach each community. He knows the spiritual gifts and resources of every pastor and church. A pastor who seeks for the Spirit's creative direction in his life, church, and community will find it.



RANDY HURST, Springfield, Missouri

Every Monday morning I go to the side of the mountain behind our church to pray and seek God. The Holy Spirit is given by God and is necessary for our personal prayer lives. To be effective intercessors, we need to speak in tongues.

If your church has plateaued or is not growing, find your Pentecostal power source. Invite the Holy Spirit into your services, altar times, prayer meetings, and Sunday School classes. Let Him begin to multiply your ministry.

Axiom 7: God's Multiplication Demands a Holy Dissatisfaction

God moves in congregations of every size. But when you look at your church and say, "We have arrived," you are on the road to spiritual death. If 50,000 people started coming to Phoenix First Assembly every Sunday morning, I would still continue to reach out to bring in more people.

If your church has plateaued or is not growing, find your Pentecostal power source.

We use our Christmas pageant to reach people for Jesus Christ. During our Christmas pageant finale, I speak about 4 minutes, and then I invite people to pray the sinner's prayer. We track salvation decisions by requesting that people complete the comment card attached to the program. Written in the corner in big, bold letters it states: Today I've Accepted Christ as My Savior.

If they have received Christ, I instruct them to check the box and tear off the card. I then ask everyone who has checked the box to walk to the platform with his or her comment cards. We take them from the sanctuary to a table where

we give them a Bible that includes a study for new Christians. Within 48 hours, we follow up with a phone call.

These people do not all stay at Phoenix First Assembly. That is not the point. Some people will not attend a big church or a Pentecostal church. But they will come to a Christmas pageant, and other churches bring their unsaved because they know we are winning people to the Lord. Soul winning is the heartthrob of this church.

Axiom 8: Multiplication Demands Focus and a Wide Net

Some of our ministries reach specific groups of people. Ministries can be homogeneous, but the church also needs to be heterogeneous in order to reach a broader segment of its community.

Because communities differ, each church will have a different target

audience. Some churches are more diverse than others. If you are preaching to the middle and upper classes, you still need to create an awareness of the needs of the poor.

A congregation needs to be challenged to look beyond its culture. Ministry needs to be relevant to particular groups but broad enough to be inclusive of everyone in the community. Give the people in your congregation who are financially well off a cause to commit to.

Our church's cause is to take God's message of reconciliation and holiness to the hurting people of the world. Our people are committed to this cause. Salvation is for everyone;

that is the beauty of the gospel.

Axiom 9: Multiplication Means Always Branching Out

Before we started the Dream Center, I said to myself, *I will take some of the money we give to missions and use it to start the Dream Center.* But God checked me and directed me not to take any money from our missions budget.

We collect one offering a year to help support the Dream Center. We do this at our Pastors School. Last year the offering was more than \$200,000 in cash and \$3.5 million in pledges. By being obedient to the Lord, God has sent money from around the world. Assemblies of God churches have helped, but most of the money has come from independent churches that do not have missions programs. As a result, we have a \$50 million property that is debt free, belongs to the Assemblies of God, and is being used to minister to lost and hurting people.

From Axioms to Action

As you search for God's plan for your church, God will reward you by pointing you to many avenues for experiencing His multiplication. It is a thrilling journey; start today. Take a simple number such as 1. Start one more ministry in your community, reach out to one more hurting person, and find one more church you can partner with in outreach. One by one, you will discover that — with God — there is no end in sight. 🌱



TOMMY BARNETT, senior pastor, Phoenix First Assembly, Phoenix, Arizona, is founder of the Los Angeles and Phoenix Dream Centers.

Biblical Principles *and* Practices

By Randy Hurst

A recent study states that only 10 percent of those who make decisions to follow Christ do so in a church service. By far, the highest priority in a church's evangelistic outreach is the personal witness of its members throughout the week.

Another study reveals that less than 10 percent of the congregation does personal evangelism. Why don't more Christians tell others about Jesus Christ? Many think the most common reason is apathy — that Christians do not care. But, for most people, the reason is their lack of confidence. I believe followers of Christ want to be effective witnesses, but they feel inadequate, intimidated, or even fearful about sharing their faith, especially with someone who does not have a Christian background.

Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). Knowing what God's

inspired Word says about the nature of evangelism will free believers from their sense of inadequacy or even fear concerning personal witness.

In Colossians, Paul addresses evangelism in a way that will help free believers from the misconceptions and emotions that may inhibit them from sharing Christ. He offers a simple, biblical, and practical approach to help believers in relational evangelism.

The most frequent request made of the Evangelism Commission is for materials concerning personal motivation and training in witnessing. Pastors and other church leaders can teach the following principles and practices advocated by Paul in a variety of ways within the church. These principles provide a biblical framework for teaching personal evangelism that can become an integral part of a believer's lifestyle.

The Apostle Paul's Approach

Evangelism is not an option; how we do it is. The same Bible that commands us to reach people with the gospel also tells us how.

Paul gave a profound yet practical teaching concerning effective Christian witness to the Colossian



for Effective Personal Witness

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church. His final instructions in the letter concerned how Christians need to relate to nonbelievers, whom he appropriately calls “outsiders” (4:5). I call Paul’s approach *response evangelism* (see verse 6). “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak. Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should *respond* to each person” (Colossians 4:2–6, emphasis added, NASB).¹

In Paul’s instructions we find that effective witness involves two principles — *dependence* (verses 2–4) and *discipline* (verses 5,6). We must discipline ourselves to do

our part in personal evangelism while, at the same time, remain dependent on God to do what only He can.

Paul expresses this divine/human interaction in the early part of his letter: “I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me” (Colossians 1:29, NASB). Paul is advocating human effort (“I labor, striving”) that depends on God (“according to His power”).

Along with the principles of dependence and discipline, Paul advocates six practices in Christian living that

help achieve ongoing, effective witness to nonbelievers. A pastor can teach these principles to a congregation in two ways. First, the pastor can teach the principles and practices together as a comprehensive biblical approach to personal evangelism. Second, each principle and practice needs to be emphasized whenever possible in different contexts. Just one teaching or sermon will not adequately help believers make these practices a part of their lifestyle.

We must discipline ourselves to do our part in personal evangelism while, at the same time, remain dependent on God to do what only He can.

Practice No. 1 — Pray for Open Doors

“Praying ... that God will open up to us a door for the word” (Colossians 4:3).

Paul begins his instruction to the Colossians by exhorting them to pray. Prayer is essential in evangelism. Unless God works in people’s hearts and lives, our work will not produce lasting results.

In the Book of Acts, we find a revealing example of God’s working with one of His messengers. When Paul and his companions went to a riverbank outside Philippi to pray on the Sabbath, they sat down and began speaking to a group of women. “A ... woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul” (Acts 16:14, NASB). Paul spoke the message. The Lord opened Lydia’s heart.

We have the privilege and responsibility of sharing the gospel. But only God can open a person’s heart. We are dependent on God to provide opportunities, to bring

understanding to hearers’ minds, and move their hearts to decision.

Believers need repeated, regular teaching on prayer and encouragement to make prayer characteristic of their daily lives.

Practice No. 2 — Make the Message Clear

“That I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak” (Colossians 4:4, NASB).

The message Paul proclaimed was the “mystery of God” (Colossians 2:2). The focus of our message must also be Jesus (see Colossians 1:13–23,28; 2:9–15).

After Jesus’ ascension, the apostle Peter quickly became one of the most prominent voices in the New Testament church. In the power of the Holy Spirit, this largely uneducated fisherman became an eloquent and forceful preacher of the gospel.

Peter preached his best-known sermon on the Day of Pentecost. But Luke records several of Peter’s proclamations of the gospel in Acts (3:12–26; 4:8–12; 5:29–32; 10:34–43). When we analyze these presentations,

we find that in each sermon Peter addresses two basic truths: *who* Jesus is and *why* He gave His life. Being prepared to discuss these two truths will equip any believer to effectively share Christ with nonbelievers.

Who was Jesus?

Accounts of Christ’s life by secular media usually present Jesus as a fictional

character. Even when the media shows Jesus as a historical person, the media depicts Him as a great teacher or even a prophet — but only a man.

Believers must communicate that Jesus was more than a teacher and prophet; He was God in human form. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died for our sins, and conquered death by rising again to offer us forgiveness of sin and the gift of everlasting life.

Why did He give His life?

John the Baptist announced why Jesus came to earth when he said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the *sin* of the world!” (John 1:29, emphasis added, NKJV).² The sins of all mankind are the reason for Jesus’ death. The existence of the Cross establishes two facts: All are sinners, and we can do nothing about it.

It is significant that Paul, like Peter, communicated the same two truths at Thessalonica. Luke summarized Paul’s teaching in the synagogues on Sabbath days: “As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. ‘This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,’ he said.” (Acts 17:2,3).

A presentation of the gospel needs to include these two truths about Jesus. Both are essential to understanding the grace God manifested through Jesus’ death on the cross, His resurrection, and His consequent purchase of the redemption of all mankind.

Practice No. 3 — Be Wise With “Outsiders”

“Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders” (Colossians 4:5, NASB).

Paul’s term *outsider* gives an



appropriate and practical description of where nonbelievers are in relation to the church. For a variety of reasons, most nonbelievers today are *farther*

Opportunities have a timeframe. The saying that opportunity only knocks once is true. An opportunity may not come a second time. Each

prayer. When unbelievers express problems, ask for the privilege of praying with them. If we believe God answers prayer, we need to

practice our belief by praying with and for people and believe that God will answer. Hearing a believer pray can have a significant effect on nonbelievers. When believers pray for a need, people can sense they are sincere and have a relationship with God.



Sharing our personal experience and relationship with Jesus Christ with sincerity and conviction can be a compelling argument with some people.

outside the Christian context than ever. We cannot assume that nonbelievers are committed to Christian values or even understand them.

The church today faces the challenge of communicating the gospel interculturally, as missionaries to foreign countries do. If believers have spent much of their lives in the church, they have acquired the perceptions, values, and vocabulary of the church. Christians and nonbelievers may both speak English, but Christians often use church terms that are unfamiliar or mean something different in secular culture.

When we use Christian jargon, we create a communication barrier with nonbelievers. Believers understand words such as *saved*, *gospel*, and *anointing*, but they are confusing to people who are unfamiliar with them. Nonbelievers must be reached through their vocabulary, not ours.

Part of a church's culture needs to be equipping Christians to communicate their faith in a language nonbelievers can understand and through concepts to which they can relate — as Jesus did.

Practice No. 4 — Make the Most of Opportunities

"Making the most of the opportunity"
(Colossians 4:5, NASB).

opportunity is unique because the people and circumstances are different.

Memorizing certain Scriptures or completing a witnessing course does not prepare Christians to respond to people. These can help, but knowing the truth that enables us to respond to individuals in a variety of situations requires an ongoing lifestyle of learning. This means we must grow in a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ. We never graduate. We are all on a spiritual journey. What we are learning personally we can share with a freshness that is convincing to nonbelievers.

Many feel inadequate to witness because they cannot retain the information or remember the Scriptures they think they need to know. Even if they could, they are not confident in their ability to recall them when needed. But every believer, even without training in personal evangelism, can share his personal testimony and pray.

Everyone has a personal testimony. Sharing our personal experience and relationship with Jesus Christ with sincerity and conviction can be a compelling argument with some people.

One of the most opportune ways of ministering to nonbelievers is

When God answers prayer, it can open hearts to the gospel.

Pastoral leadership can also initiate opportunities for church members to connect with unbelievers through outreach events.

Practice No. 5 — Speak With Grace

"Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6, NKJV).

In 1 Peter 3:15, the apostle Peter makes a comment similar to Paul's. Peter tells believers to always be ready to give an answer for their hope, but with "gentleness and respect." Not only what we say is important, but also how we say it.

Much of our interpersonal communication is nonverbal. If there is a contradiction between *what* someone says and the *way* he says it, we will believe the nonverbal message every time. A person may view an apology — given with the same words but spoken in different ways — as either sincere or sarcastic. Voice inflection and facial expressions can send mixed messages that contradict the words we say.

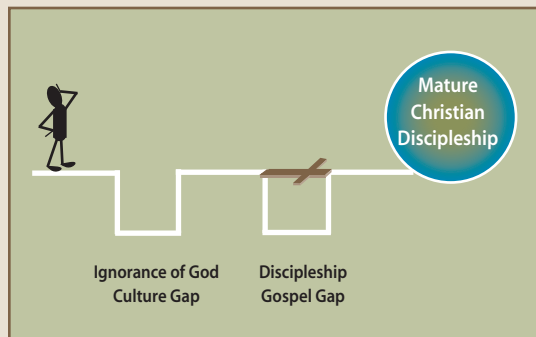
Many of those we are trying to reach in the United States have a negative history with the church and are defensive or even hostile

▶▶ The Engel Scale¹

The Engel Scale is a numbering system that shows where people are on their spiritual walk.

- 8 Awareness of a supreme being, but no knowledge of the gospel.
- 7 Initial awareness of the gospel.
- 6 Awareness of the fundamentals of the gospel.
- 5 Grasp of the implications of the gospel.
- 4 Positive attitude toward the gospel.
- 3 Personal problem recognition.
- 2 Decision to act.
- 1 Repentance and faith in Christ.
- 0 Conversion
- +1 Postdecision evaluation.
- +2 Incorporation into the body of Christ.
- +3 A lifetime of conceptual and behavioral growth in Christ.

People are willing to belong before they are willing to believe. When sharing the gospel, use basic language. People



cannot understand words such as *repentance*, *sanctification*, and *redemption* if they have not first heard and seen the words *love*, *kindness*, and *acceptance*. Even God's Word suggests that God's love leads to repentance. These embracing words lead to the deeper things of the gospel. Paul recognized that babies need milk before they need meat. He presented the gospel at different levels according to whom he was ministering.

Our desire is to see people progress from the negative numbers to the positive, and eventually to a healthy, growing +3. A gap often exists between the world of unbelievers and the world of believers. The *social-arbitrary knowledge*, or *culture-specific knowledge* of Christians can be so thoroughly developed that they become completely alien to non-Christians. Such Christians begin to unconsciously use jargon that only they can relate to because they have learned the culture of Christianity.

To be missional, we need to learn how to reframe our life, actions, and speech, so it is relevant to those who have not developed a grasp of Christianity. We must learn, as Paul said, to "become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22).²

This reframing extends even to our speech. Paul, in his sermon at Mars Hill,

to Christian witness. Others with emotional scars have become insensitive to spiritual matters. A Christian with personal grace and credibility can help counteract the mixed signals people have received from those whose lives have been inconsistent with their message.

As salt seasons food, a spirit of grace, gentleness, and respect needs to season our conversation with nonbelievers. We must not compromise the truth, but we can communicate the truth with kindness.

Believers need continual discipleship in spiritual formation, so the fruit of the Spirit becomes increasingly evident in their lives. The most critical issue in personal evangelism today is the credibility of the messenger.

Practice No. 6 — Respond Individually

"That you will know how you should respond to each person" (Colossians 4:6, NASB).

Relevance is an individual issue. In our efforts to understand and act

postmodern are profiles and stereotypes, not personal realities.

People are not statistics or just souls we win for the Kingdom. People are individuals with distinct personalities — unique creations for whom God

God calls every believer to be a witness, and every believer can be one, with God's help.

wisely toward outsiders, we must never forget that each outsider is unique. Learning the mindset, values, concerns, interests, and desires of people in various cultures and generations is helpful. Generalizations, however, can be misleading because every person is unique. Terms such as *baby boomers*, *busters*, *gen Xers*, and *post-Christian* or

has a personal plan and purpose. We build God's kingdom one person at a time.

Jesus is the greatest example in Paul's teaching about responding to people. Jesus' teaching was clear to His hearers. He used vocabulary and word pictures that came from the daily life of His audience. He identified and connected

uses the cultural icons of the age (gods and idols, and the poets of the age) to make his case. He refers to the statue of the unknown God and to their poets who said, "We ... are his children" (Acts 17:22–31), to speak at a level that was relevant and meaningful to those whom he was trying to reach.

The Shaping of Things To Come, by Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch³ uses the graph to explain how nonbelievers must overcome the culture gap of their ignorance of God before they can cross the discipleship gap that all believers eventually must cross.

If people go through stages, such as Engel suggests, we must examine how and when we present the verbal and nonverbal cues of the kingdom of God. Even Jesus insisted on talking to children even as His disciples were trying to send them away. He taught His disciples both verbally and nonverbally that one's heart must be like a child's to enter the kingdom of heaven.

with His hearers, used language they could understand, and concepts to which they could relate.

We need to remind ourselves that the most quoted verse in the Bible, John 3:16, was not part of one of Jesus' sermons. Jesus gave these words in a conversation spoken softly in the night to Nicodemus, as Jesus responded to this Pharisee's searching questions.

Even though He taught the multitudes, Jesus focused on individuals and responded to them. Lost people deserve what those who came into contact with Jesus received — a personal response.

God calls every believer to be a witness, and every believer can be one, with God's help. Church

When He spoke to the adulterous woman at the well (John 4:5–29), He did not begin the conversation with her sin and her need to repent. Instead, He addressed her at the physical level when He said, "Give Me a drink." He addressed her current lifestyle by mentioning the fact "she had multiple husbands." He addressed her need to find satisfaction — to drink of all that is good. He then offered her living water. "Jesus' offer was not a Christian cliché at the time; it was an offer to meet her current need in life.

We must, as Christians, consider our words. Our words may at times come from a need in our life, but those we are encountering may not have the same needs. They may not need church right now, but they may need someone to demonstrate God's love through kind words and nonverbal cues, such as action and service. How we show concern on our face and how we frame words determine whether we appear repulsive in our pride and abstract in our church

members can be confident that God will use them in effective witness as they cooperate in the work the Holy Spirit is doing in a nonbeliever's life. These five verses in Colossians offer a biblical, practical, and comprehensive teaching concerning personal evangelism. The principles of dependence (verses 2–4) and discipline (verses 5,6) relate to all of Christian living. The practices need to be continually reinforced in all aspects of church life.

The truth of God's Word concerning the nature of evangelism can set people free from whatever hinders them as well as help them find the purpose God want to accomplish through them. If pastoral leadership will help

talk, or kind and gentle in our genuine concern for the needs of our neighbor.

It is time for believers to rediscover the forgotten language of their spiritual youth. We must speak to nonbelievers where they live, where they work, and wherever they are on the Engel Scale.



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NOTES

1. Engel Scale of Evangelism adapted from James F. Engel and H. Wilbert Norton, *What's Gone Wrong With the Harvest?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975).
2. Scripture references are taken from The New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted. Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (<http://www.Lockman.org>).
3. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things To Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004).

people understand the powerful truths Paul teaches, believers can develop a lifestyle of effective personal evangelism. 🌟



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Response Evangelism, visit <http://www.reaching.ag.org> and <http://www.evangelism.ag.org>

NOTES

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A Vision



By Eldin Villafañe

OUR CITIES — OUR NATIONS

Our cities are not what they were 50 years ago, 25 years ago, or even 10 years ago. Our cities are multiethnic, multicultural, and increasingly multilingual. They are increasingly divided between the “haves” and “have-nots” and between people of color and white.

While Marshall McLuhan spoke of a “global village” to highlight the critical communication and interdependency of contemporary life, we need to further qualify it to read an “urban global village.” The apparent contradiction of

I am deeply concerned with a church that needs a holistic vision for the city.

urban/village underscores the reality of the global process of people/ethnic movements from village to major urban centers. This worldwide phenomenon is also, given our immigration patterns, the experience of cities in the United States. Be it Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, or Los Angeles, each is undergoing this globalization process: a multiethnic and multicultural reality increasingly defining its *ethos*.

Ben Wattenberg, the author and demographer, speaks of our cities and our nation as experiencing “the dawning of the first universal nation.” The notion of the United States as a “universal nation” is not new since historically the great American experiment has represented this very aspiration. It is important to note that this internal

development is consistent with the external “global mission” of America found in its cultural narratives — stories that shape American images of self and world.¹

A SECOND CITY

Our cities can be further described in the words of Charles Dickens as *A Tale of Two Cities* (“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times”), for there is a *second city* in all our urban areas. This *second city* is the apt classification of the former governor of New York, Mario Cuomo, at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government several years

For The City:

The Jeremiah Paradigm for the City

A BIBLICAL PARADIGM

In view of the phenomenon of urbanization and globalization, and the problems and promises that go along with it, I need to raise a few critical questions: What is the role of the people of God in the city? What is the vision of my church for the city?

A second city is one that increasingly must live with a second-hand education, second-hand housing, second-hand security, second-hand health services, and second-hand clothing.

ago (February 23, 1999). His eloquent speech, labeled “prophetic” by the secular media, underlined the plight of those living in the *second city*. A *second city* is one that increasingly must live with a second-hand education, second-hand housing, second-hand security, second-hand health services, and second-hand clothing. A *second city* is one that increasingly must live with the deterioration — the breakdown — of its moral and spiritual foundation.

I am concerned for the city — particularly that inner city reality, the *second city*. And I am deeply concerned with a church that needs a holistic vision for the city.

A very wise man of long ago, a man that knew a little of the complexities of the city, said: “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). The NIV reads as follows: “Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint.” The absence of vision (or revelation) results in a social meltdown, a moral and spiritual disintegration. Individuals and institutions — including the church — that are to model and live out a vision are often themselves visionless. A vision, whether we apply it to an individual or an institution, gives direction, focuses energies, informs content and



A Vision For The City

character, and sets the framework for *seeing* and *valuing* life's true meaning and goals. It shapes the image of self and world.

Through the years, many books and persons have inspired and challenged my work in urban ministry. Yet, time and again, I have been driven by God's Spirit to find fresh inspiration in the words of the prophet Jeremiah: "And seek the peace [*shalom*] of the city ... and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace [*shalom*] you will have peace [*shalom*]" (29:7).

Jeremiah's words are instructive. They present a new challenge to God's people in a new reality. You are familiar with the historical background of Jeremiah 29 — the people of God are captive, exiled in Babylon. From Jerusalem, Jeremiah writes a radical letter. It addresses their question, our question: What is the role of the people of God in the city? Or, to bring it closer to home: What is the role of the church (God's people) in the city today? Jeremiah's answer — I call it "The Jeremiah Paradigm for the City" — is an overarching, holistic vision for the city, one that can inspire our work in urban and intercultural ministry.

Jeremiah's answer, particularly verses 4–7, involves three fundamental theological elements critical to any theology of urban ministry. Said differently, Jeremiah's paradigm stems from: (1) a theology of context, (2) a theology of mission/ministry, and (3) a theology of prayer (or spirituality). Corresponding to it are three key words: presence, peace, and prayer.

It is important to underline here that recent New Testament scholarship has affirmed the significance of this passage of Jeremiah for the Early Church and for us today. Bruce W. Winter in his *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and*

Citizens posits as his major thesis that of all letters in the New Testament, it is 1 Peter that considers the theme of the welfare of the city in detail (particularly 1 Peter 2:11–3:17). He further states that 1 Peter's call to "seek the welfare of the city" is based on Jeremiah 29 as the key theological paradigm to "do good and seek peace" (3:11) — a text that informs these first century Christians of the *diaspora* to be engaged in the polis — the city.²

A THEOLOGY OF CONTEXT

Presence: Jeremiah 29:4–6 speaks to the church concerning its relationship to the city, to culture and society. Jeremiah's words to those exiled in "wicked" Babylon are still relevant. Against the false prophets who might call for "assimilation," "revolution," or "escapism," Jeremiah called for "critical engagement" — for presence.

I am helped by the etymology of the word church (*ekklesia*). In ancient Greece it referred to the congregation or assembly of the "called out ones"

present *in* the city, *with* and *for* the city; yet it also knows that it is not *of* the city. The church is present as salt and light (Matthew 5:13–16) in all the affairs of the *polis*.

Moreover, a key word/concept that clarifies the church's presence in the city is contextualization. Contextualization is the *sine qua non* of all faithful and effective urban ministry. It may be best defined by the biblical paradigm of incarnation (John 1:14; Philippians 2:5–11). While urban ministry is to serve the whole city — the neighborhoods as well as the greater metropolitan area — it begins with and contextually expresses a commitment to and solidarity with those with whom Jesus did. In the language of Leonardo Boff or Gustavo Gutierrez, it manifests "a preferential option for the poor" — for those who live in the "second city." Urban ministry is challenged to humbly express an "urban *kenosis*." It must struggle to empty itself of the prerogatives, prestige, and power so highly valued by the world, and pitch its

The church cannot be indifferent to the human needs in the city — be they physical, political, economic, or spiritual.

to discuss the situation of the *polis*. The church gathers to worship and to equip itself to impact the *polis*. It does not live for itself, but for the kingdom (rule, sovereignty, lordship) of God. The church cannot be indifferent to the human needs in the city — be they physical, political, economic, or spiritual. It does not hide; neither does it integrate falsely in society. The people of God do not compromise its identity. It knows that it must be

tent among the poor and marginalized communities in our cities.³

A THEOLOGY OF MISSION/MINISTRY

Peace: Jeremiah 29:7 "Seek the peace of the city," speaks to the church of our mission in the city. The word and concept "peace" (*shalom*) best sums up for me the mission and ministry of the church. Scripture presents to us at least three dimensions of *shalom*, three dimensions of peace

that we are encouraged to seek. They can be summarized as: peace with God (Romans 5:1), the peace of God (Philippians 4:7) and (seek) the peace of the city (Jeremiah 29:7).

In the Old Testament, *shalom* speaks of wholeness, soundness, completeness, health, harmony, integrity, prosperity, reconciliation, welfare, justice, and salvation — both personal and social.⁴ The church is an instrument, a servant, of peace in the city. It preaches and lives out the *shalom* of God.

The essence of the gospel is *shalom*. In Christ, peace (*eirene*, in the New Testament is a word richly informed by the Old Testament word *shalom*) has come (Luke 1:79; 2:14); by Him it is given/bestowed (Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50), and His disciples are its messengers (Luke 24:45). The church needs to be reminded, in the words of Peter at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:36): “You know the message God sent ... telling the *good news of peace* through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.” We are exhorted by Paul in Ephesians 6:15, and I like the way the New Revised Standard Version renders it, “As shoes for your feet, put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace.”

The church must be an embodiment and an agent of *shalom* in our cities — particularly in those places of brokenness and hopelessness, the *second city*. Expressed in the classical missiological categories of the church’s mission, it means: *kerygma* — speaks of a church that proclaims by word and deed the good news of peace through Jesus Christ; *koinonia* — speaks of a church that lives in fellowship and in authentic community, one that has experience and models for society “the peace of God that transcends all understanding” (Philippians 4:7);

diakonia — speaks of a church, and of Christian ministry or service of *shalom* to a hurting and broken humanity — an agent of reconciliation, welfare, and justice; and *leitourgia* — speaks of a church that celebrates and worships the Prince of Peace.

A THEOLOGY OF PRAYER (SPIRITUALITY)

Prayer: Jeremiah 29:7, “and pray to the Lord for it,” speaks to the church of the spirituality needed to struggle and live in the city. A true urban spirituality knows the critical importance of prayer. Prayer is a radical and revolutionary act. Karl Barth states it well: “To clasp the hand in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.”

Read carefully the words of my colleague, Peter Kuzmic, Paul E. and Eva B. Toms, distinguished professor of World Missions and European Studies, on the theme of prayer: “In Eastern Europe, we have seen the hand of God bring down communism. Prayer is the strongest political power in the world. We have sometimes confined it to our personal piety and concerns, but our Savior not only meets individual needs, He is also the Creator, the Sustainer of the universe. He is the Lord over the nations, and He answers the prayers of His people.

“The evidence of God’s supernatural work throughout history shows us that prayer moves the hand of God. Prayer changes the fate of nations. Prayer brings victory at the brink of defeat. When the church is at its weakest, it still has access to the power of God through prayer.”⁵

A true urban spirituality knows that the struggle requires the nurturing and “caring of the soul.” Spiritual power encounters are indeed present in the *polis*. Equipped with the whole armor

of God, we go out to confront the “principalities and powers.”

In the last part of this text, Jeremiah states a great truth (and a seemingly ironic appeal to “enlightened self-interest”) when he encourages them and us “for in its peace [that of “wicked” Babylon] you [the people of God] will have peace” (7). Our challenge is clear. We should pray and seek the peace of the city, if not for “Babylon’s” health, at least for the church’s health. ☺



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1. See, Roger G. Betsworth, *Social Ethics: An Examination of American Moral Tradition* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 107–37; see also “Toward the First Universal Nation,” *The Boston Globe*, 16 March 1991, p. 22.
2. Bruce W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens (First-Century Christians in the Graeco-Roman World)* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994).
3. See Eldin Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1995).
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CHURCH PLANTING *and* EVANGELISM:

A Prescription for Reaching America

5 reasons why church planting is
the best methodology of evangelism.

By Steven M. Pike

A friend recently asked two questions that reminded me of a serious misconception in the collective mind of the American church: “Why do we need to plant more churches? Is not strengthening existing churches the best way to reach America?” Many American Christians share these common ideas.

In spite of evidence to the contrary, many church members believe the number of existing churches is adequate for the work of evangelism. But research shows that even if every church in America were healthy and growing, the present number of churches could not adequately evangelize America. In fact, the current increase in churches is only a quarter of what we need to keep up with population growth.¹

Far from being overchurched, America is drastically underchurched. The church-to-population ratio has been steadily declining for the past century. In 1900, there were 28 churches for every 10,000 Americans. By 1950, that number had dropped to 17 for every 10,000. In 2000, there were only 12 churches per 10,000; and in 2004, the ratio was down to 11/10,000.²

Church researcher David Olson shares the startling reality that since 1990 the percentage of Americans attending church each week has plummeted from 20.4 percent in 1990 to 17.5 percent in 2005. The state with the *highest* level of church attendance (Louisiana) has only 28 percent of its citizens in a house of worship during any given week.³ Depending on who is counting, America is either the third⁴ or the 14th⁵ largest mission field in the world. If America were a nation on the other side of the world, we would be tireless in our efforts to send missionaries.

When we come face to face with our present reality, it would seem that only the coldest heart could remain complacent about the need to reach Americans.

In a spiritual sense, America has become the *dark* continent. When we come face to face with our present reality, it would seem that only the coldest heart could remain complacent about the need to reach Americans.

We may profess to have warm hearts, but our behavior has been tepid at best. Since 1990, American church leaders have been bombarded with an axiom that originated in a C. Peter Wagner book: "Church planting is the best methodology of evangelism under the sun."⁶ Most leaders are aware of this phrase, but our collective behavior

Church to Population Ratio — 1900-2004

Far from being overchurched, America is drastically underchurched. The church-to-population ratio has been steadily declining for the past century.

Year	Church/population Ratio
1900	28 / 10,000
1950	17 / 10,000
2000	12 / 10,000
2004	11 / 10,000

indicates that we do not believe it is true. The church that intentionally gives people time and finances to plant new churches is the rare exception, not the rule. The prevailing and most celebrated model of church

shepherd leaves the *found* crowd to look for the one who is *lost*. Jesus clearly proclaimed that He "came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). He was a friend of sinners, and He was unpopular with those considered righteous by society's standards.

If we are to pattern our definition of ministry success after the priorities of Christ, we may need to change our measuring stick from *bigger is better* to asking, *Are lost people being led to know the Savior?* This approach to evaluating ministry effectiveness aligns us with Kingdom values and takes the focus off the *size* of our organization. It helps us ask questions that matter to God, such as: *Who are the lost people we are influencing to follow Jesus? How does our church make God's presence and peace known in our community?*

Following Jesus on His mission leads us to renew our focus on leading lost people to know Christ. In fact, since seeking and saving the lost was the primary mission of Jesus, it is also the primary mission of His church. This brings us back to the quote: "Church

growth and evangelism is the growing megachurch. Little or no recognition is given to churches that reach the lost by planting churches.

While megachurches are not *wrong*, evaluating the evangelistic effectiveness of a church by the size of its budget and the number of people in the pews is misleading. *Bigger is better* is an American value, not a Kingdom value. Jesus gives us the Kingdom standard of success when He tells the story of the lost sheep (Luke 15:4). The priority of the Kingdom is the lost. The

Numerous studies show that younger churches consistently demonstrate a higher level of evangelistic proficiency than older, established churches.

planting is the best methodology of evangelism." If this statement is true, we must conclude that planting churches is an essential activity of every healthy church.

Why Church Planting Is the Best Methodology of Evangelism

Why is planting churches the best methodology of evangelism? First and most important, it is the biblical pattern for the evangelistic expansion of the Church. When Jesus gave the Great Commission to His disciples, the world population was approximately 100 million people. The Great Commission is a potent mandate. A few years after Jesus gave this command, the Jews in Thessalonica described the disciples as those who "caused trouble all over the world" (Acts 17:6).

This story from the Book of Acts begs us to discover how a group of disorganized fishermen and a tax collector with no mass media technology and no rapid modes of transportation could spread the gospel so effectively. How could they enter a town they had never visited and find that their reputation as influential world changers had preceded them? The answer is that they planted churches. Everywhere they went they made disciples and formed new communities of faith. Read Acts again and look for evidence of church-planting activity. It is throughout the book. In fact, a careful study reveals *chains* of church-planting activity that can serve as models from which we can learn.

One such *chain* is the sequence of church planting that eventually led to sending Paul on his first missionary journey. Jerusalem was the birthplace of the first church. Then persecution scattered believers throughout the

Roman Empire. Some of these disciples traveled to the island of Cyprus because in Acts 11 we discover that disciples went from Cyprus and Cyrene to Antioch and planted a church. Later, in Acts 13, the church in Antioch obeyed the Holy Spirit and sent out Paul and Barnabas for ministry.

Paul started churches everywhere he went. Some scholars postulate that Ephesus was the *parent church* of the other churches referenced in

▶ AG Church Multiplication Network X



The Assemblies of God Church Multiplication Network is a cooperative effort whereby Assemblies of God pastors, churches, districts, and the national office leverage their collective resources to plant as many healthy churches as possible. Each leader, church, or district is encouraged to ask: How can we best use our resources to maximize our collaborative planting effectiveness? When they find and act on the answer to that question, they become part of the Network. This allows every person, church, or district to participate in planting at various levels. Here are some possible ways to participate:

- Pray about leading a church-planting project.
- Pray about being on a church-planting team.
- Invest in the Church Multiplication Network Matching Fund. This is a pool that provides matching funds for qualified church-planting projects. The fund's structure

recycles every contribution to

provide start-up funds for new churches.

- Pray regularly for new church-planting projects. A list of new Assemblies of God planting projects is available at <http://www.churchmultiplicationnetwork.org>.
- Pray about becoming a parent church by sending out a planting team, starting a satellite church, organizing a house church network, or discovering a new approach to birthing a church that reaches lost people.
- Support church planters with prayer, finances, and personnel.
- Provide temporary staffing for the start-up phase of a new church. For example, send a worship team, nursery staff, children's ministry team, or youth leader to assist a new church as it begins its public ministry.
- Become a church-planting church that identifies, develops, and sends potential church planters to plant new churches.

STEVEN M. PIKE, Springfield, Missouri

What is MX9?

MX9 is the first goal of the Assemblies of God Church Multiplication Network. It stands for 1,000 churches planted or committed by 2009. National resources available through the Network to assist in reaching this goal include:

- A church-planter assessment system that assists planters and churches in discerning the right placement and timing for potential leaders.
- Church-planting BootCamps designed to assist planters in developing strategic plans and action steps for launching the church.
- A coaching network to provide every church planter with a qualified coach.
- A pool of matching funds to assist church plants with start-up expenses.
- An interest-only loan available exclusively to new church plants through AG Financial.
- An annual Church-planting Leadership Summit that provides exposure to leading church-planting practitioners and authors.

STEVEN M. PIKE, Springfield, Missouri

the first few chapters of Revelation. Planting churches appears to be the biblical norm for a healthy movement of churches.

The second reason church planting is the best methodology of evangelism is the evangelistic productivity of young churches. Numerous studies show that younger churches

conducted in 1992 that found the average number of converts produced by churches each year per 100 members is: churches 0 to 3 years old, 10; churches 3 to 15 years old, 5; and churches older than 15 years, 3.⁸ The Church Multiplication Training Center reported similar numbers from a study conducted in 1998.⁹

A recent study found that churches 25 years of age and older usually decline in attendance year after year.

consistently demonstrate a higher level of evangelistic proficiency than older, established churches. For example, a study conducted among Southern Baptist churches indicated that SBC churches 10 years or older average 2.5 baptisms for every 100 active members, while SBC churches 10 years or younger average 10.8 baptisms per 100 active members.⁷

Church leadership authority Aubrey Malphurs reported on a study

A recent study conducted by author and researcher Ed Stetzer clearly demonstrates the tendency for younger churches to be more evangelistic. He specifically looked at Assemblies of God churches and found the typical Assemblies of God church plant baptized an average of 31 people annually by its fourth year.¹⁰ In contrast, established Assemblies of God churches baptized an average of only 9 people per year.¹¹ It is a fact:

Planting new churches results in more people coming to Christ.

The third reason church planting is the best evangelistic methodology is sociological. It is easier for new people to join a new organization than to join an existing one. The longer a church exists, the more likely it will become a *closed* relational system. Aging churches have significant momentum toward taking care of their members rather than reaching the lost (new people).

Every pastor has experienced the pressure from longtime church members to provide pastoral care for their loved ones who are in the hospital or for benevolence. Without intervention, a sense of entitlement forms in the minds of members who have faithfully paid their tithes over many years. The building becomes *their* building. They worry about whether the youth pastor is providing good ministry for *their* kids. The collective heart of the church easily turns toward meeting the needs of regular attendees and away from the lost. When the lost do venture into a church whose primary focus is the needs of its members, they quickly experience the sensation of being an *outsider*. But in a new church, everyone is new; there are no insiders or outsiders. New churches have fewer relational barriers to evangelism. When lost people begin to follow Christ, it is easier for them to find a place in a new church.

A fourth reason church planting is the best evangelistic methodology is *desperation*. Many existing churches have achieved a level of income and attendance that produces congregational satisfaction. This sense of satisfaction minimizes their desire to do anything that might rock the boat. Congregants on Sunday mornings see a decent crowd and feel

good about their church. After all, the treasurer pays the bills, the worship leader selects good music, the pastor preaches respectable sermons, and, occasionally, someone responds to the weekly call for salvation and baptism. The resulting ministry routine provides little motivation to reach the lost.

A recent study found that churches 25 years of age and older usually decline in attendance year after year (see graph). Churches older than 25 years that are growing by reaching the lost are exceptions to the norm.¹² This is not the case in new churches. This same research revealed that new churches started in the decade of the 00s are growing by an average of 9 percent annually.¹³ The reason: they are highly motivated to get out and connect with people. They know the church will never become a reality unless they launch out, trust God, and take faith risks. God honors their

faith and lost people become disciples. When members of the new church see their faith risks becoming realities, they are encouraged to take more faith risks, and the young church surges forward again.

A fifth reason church planting is the best evangelistic methodology is because new churches are focusing on the lost. As recently as 20 years ago, the dominant reason to plant a church was to provide a specific denominational presence in a community. For example, a typical church-planting project would begin with a call from a member of an Assemblies of God church who had moved to a new community that did not have an Assemblies of God church. After indicating his desire to see an Assemblies of God church established in his town, a planter, along with a core group of Assemblies of God people, would come to the town and establish a new work.

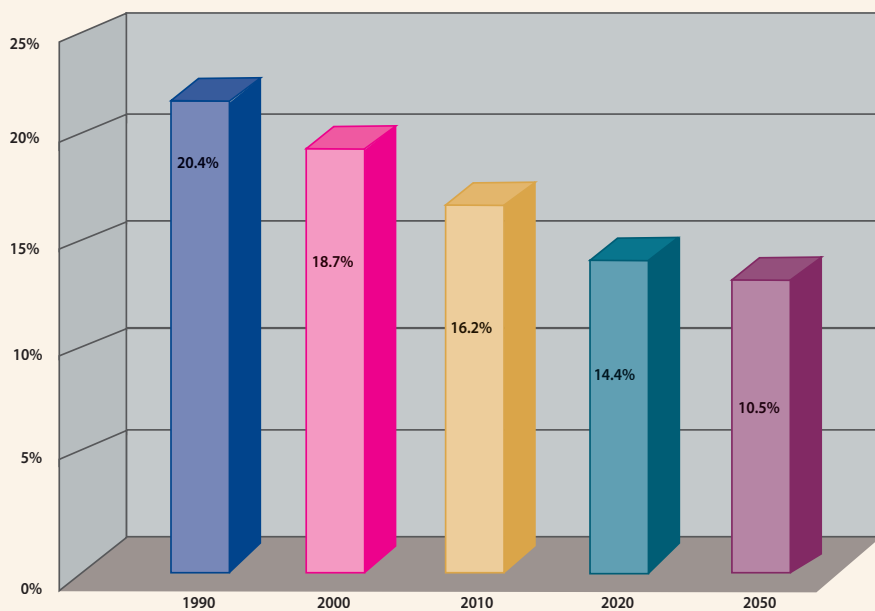
The reason to start a church is to provide worship that is familiar to people with an Assemblies of God background. While this kind of planting still occurs, it is no longer the most common. The potential harvest is the motivating factor behind most church plants started in the last 10 years. A planter does demographic research on a community and discovers a large percentage of lost people. The planter says, "We need to plant an Assemblies of God church in this town because 10,000 lost people live there." When the harvest motivates the plant, God honors the faith of the new church and blesses the congregation with an evangelistic anointing.

If New Churches Are Better at Reaching the Lost, Should We Shut Down All Existing Churches and Start Over?

No. Existing churches do reach people for Christ. The solution is not either/or. It is both/and. Healthy existing churches do have some ministry advantages over start-up churches. Healthy existing churches have:

- established track records in their communities that create a platform of trust from which they can launch effective ministry efforts to reach the lost.
- acquired significant people and financial resources that allow them to meet community needs with strong solutions.
- often been able to provide a diversity of small-group ministries and programs that equip them to connect to a greater cross section of the population than a start-up church can typically serve.
- benefited from years of building their technical infrastructure and

Projected Percentage of the Population Attending Christian Churches on Any Given Weekend



STEVEN M. PIKE, Springfield, Missouri

New churches planted by existing churches have a higher survival rate than churches with no partnership.

are often able to host significant ministry events that bring together large numbers of seekers and saints.

- the potential to make great parent churches.

Planting Churches — the Best Methodology

Planting churches is the best methodology of evangelism, and planting new churches out of existing churches is the best methodology of church planting. Here are some reasons why planting churches out of existing churches is the best method.

First, when an existing church plants a new church it slows down the aging process for the existing church. Planting a new church creates opportunity for the existing church to take new risks and exercise faith. The planting process also creates changes in church leadership as some leaders leave to assist with the plant and new leaders take their places. This activity increases the productive missional

years of the existing church.

Second, new churches planted by existing churches have a higher survival rate than churches with no partnership. Several factors contribute to their success: closer supervision, a higher probability of a coaching/mentoring relationship, higher level of financial stability, and a more reliable source of leadership resources.

Third, churches that choose to regularly plant churches usually have a higher capacity for leadership development. In fact, leadership development becomes a necessity because of the continual need for leaders for the new plants. This produces a culture where leaders are regularly developed and deployed in the existing church and in the new plants.

Fourth, churches that choose to plant churches usually have a Kingdom heart. Scanning the harvest field protects them from becoming ingrown and self-absorbed. Just as

it is difficult to be a self-centered parent, it is difficult for a parent church to turn in on itself. As a result, churches that give birth to new churches tend to be healthier in the long term than churches that are consumed with self-preservation.

The goal of every healthy church is to reproduce itself.

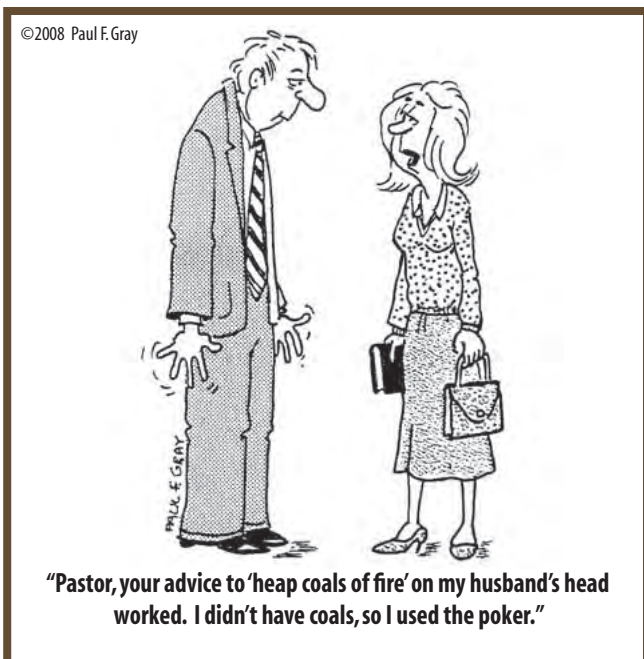
Recently, the Assemblies of God has taken dramatic steps to leverage the resources of existing churches toward a greater commitment to expanding the Kingdom through church planting. We have formed a networking hub called the Assemblies of God Church Multiplication Network. The foundational idea behind this network is to work together to plant as many new churches as possible, resulting in a wave of evangelism unlike anything we have seen before. For more information, visit <http://www.churchmultiplicationnetwork.org>. 



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Evangelism or

Do not assume that decision making and disciple making are synonymous. Nearly every pastor can testify that not all decisions result in disciples and responsible church members.

By Charles Arn

A growing body of evidence exists in church growth research, as well as in the practical experience of pastors and church leaders, that causes me to make the following startling observation: Many current evangelism methods are, at best, irrelevant to church growth and are, at worse, inhibiting the effective outreach of well-meaning Christians and churches.

When I first considered this paradox, I found it both curious and discouraging. Most churches can point to some results from their evangelistic endeavors. But if we are honest with ourselves, the return on the investment of our people, time, and resources spent in evangelism does not show a healthy stewardship of the “talents” the Master has left in our care (Matthew 25:14–28). In fact, the methods used in many evangelistic activities seem to *confine* the gospel within the walls of the church.

But church growth research does not study traditions simply to create disorder in the status quo. Instead, it searches for best practices that help maximize results in response to Christ’s command to “go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:20).

Toward this end, I would like to highlight some basic differences between traditional *evangelism*, as commonly practiced today, and *disciple making*, a term that more accurately describes our efforts in response to the Great Commission. A more complete discussion of both the research and a church growth model of evangelism may be found in the book, *The Master’s Plan for Making Disciples*.¹

What Is Success?

This question highlights one of the basic differences between *evangelism* and *disciple making*.

Evangelism. Success is when a non-Christian gives a verbal response that indicates his endorsement of a set of convictions reflective of his new Christian faith.

Disciple making. Success is when others observe a change of behavior in a person that indicates his personal integration of a set of convictions reflective of a new Christian faith.

Notice the subtle, yet fundamental distinction. Because the goals are different, the *process* used to achieve these goals often differs.

The church-growth goal, in response to the Great Commission, is: “to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, to persuade people to become His disciples and responsible members of His Church.”² *Observation* is the only way to identify a responsible church member.

The evangelism goal, by contrast, usually has a *decision-oriented* objective, and focuses on leading a person to verbal repentance and commitment to Christ. Whereas a *decision* focuses on a specific event, a disciple suggests an enduring lifestyle. Do not assume that *decision making* and *disciple making* are synonymous. Nearly every pastor can testify that not all *decisions* result in *disciples* and responsible church members.

Disciple Making?



Because evangelism defines success on the basis of a decision, to hasten a non-Christian's decision for Christ is the purpose of its activities. The good news is that many evangelism methods are successful in doing just that. The bad news is that, in so doing, they may be diminishing the successful assimilation of people into active church involvement and discipleship. How so?

What Is the Method?

Evangelism. This method focuses on bringing a person to an intellectual endorsement of Christian beliefs, observed by a verbal acknowledgement of these new beliefs. Since a verbal acknowledgement validates this endorsement of Christian values, the process of effective evangelism is a *verbal presentation* of these Christian convictions.

Disciple making. This method focuses on bringing a person to a behavioral change that reflects the integration of Christian values into that person's life, as observed by his participation in the life and fellowship of a church. Since behavioral observation validates one's endorsement of Christian values, the process of effective disciple making is *experiential observation* of such Christian behavior by the non-Christian.

Evangelism or Disciple Making?

The two need not be mutually exclusive. But distinguishing the objectives helps us more clearly consider the best practices for achieving them. The key question is whether a non-Christian's lifelong values, attitudes, and lifestyle are more likely to be changed through the verbal presentation of information, or the experiential observation of behavior.

The phrase, *actions speak louder than words*, is particularly true when bringing others to new faith and Christian discipleship. If the goal is a changed life, and not just repeated words, the method employed will make a difference in the result observed. The apostle John makes a similar observation about sharing God's love with others: "Love must not be a matter of words or talk; it must be genuine, and show itself in action" (1 John 3:18, NEB).³

Effective disciple-making strategies need to provide opportunities for non-Christians to come in regular contact with and observe a variety of believers in many situations. Research bears out the importance of multiple exposures

to the Christian message and people.

A study compared two groups of new believers. One group was comprised of new converts who had become active church members in the year following their conversion. The second group were people who had dropped out of church, or had never gotten involved following their conversion. The variable that was studied was the difference in the number of Christian exposures the people in each group had experienced *prior* to their conversion. The difference was significant. Active members had an average of six Christian exposures to the gospel in the year prior to their conversion. Dropouts, by contrast, had seen or heard the Christian message only twice before their decision. The researcher's conclusion: "When non-Christians have multiple opportunities to see, hear, and experience the Christian message, they are more likely to understand the implications of their commitment, and have fewer surprises following their commitment."⁴

(And are therefore more likely to stick with their commitment.) Traditional evangelism strategies, by contrast, often assert that *now is the moment*, and encourage a response regardless of the history or context.

Who Is Involved?

Evangelism. The assumption is that any Christian can adequately represent Christ and sufficiently

model the Christian faith so a non-Christian can grasp the implications and meaning of becoming a Christian disciple.

Disciple making. The assumption is that any Christian cannot adequately represent Christ, and only through exposure to the body of Christ — the church — can a non-Christian understand the implications and what it means to become a Christian disciple.

This distinction does not imply that a Christian cannot lead another person to a new relationship with Christ. Many have. God uses any and all means to bring people to new life.

What these two statements do suggest is that in our response to Christ's Great Commission, we need to be aware that the church — with its complementary assortment of spiritual gifts — more accurately reflects the body of Christ than any individual member. Exposure to the church provides the most accurate picture available of the incarnation of Christ in today's world. A person exposed to the body of Christ is more likely to see and experience the incarnation of Christ on earth.

Using spiritual gifts in the church is an important strategy for disciple making. Scripture shows that spiritual gifts are for building up (that is, *growth*) the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:12). We can reasonably expect that Christians will be able to witness to the hope that is within them (1 Peter 3:15), but this does not mean every Christian is a gifted evangelist. According to Ephesians 4:11, God gave some in the church to be evangelists—those who are better able to lead people to new Christian faith.⁵

Can a person have a role in making disciples if he does not have the gift of being an evangelist, but does have the gift of hospitality? Yes. Such





Whereas a *decision* focuses on a specific event, a *disciple* focuses on an enduring lifestyle.

persons most effective witness may be in opening their home to non-Christian friends, church visitors, or people in need. As a result, using one's gift in disciple making does not require that every Christian possess the characteristics required in traditional evangelism: extroverted personality, verbal fluency, resolute tenacity, good memory, and quick answers to complex questions. Disciple making is using your unique spiritual gift in concert with others' gifts to bring people into the family of God.

More than 30 years ago, Win Arn and Donald McGavran made an important observation in their groundbreaking book, *How To Grow a Church*: "You would misuse Christ's gifts if you used them solely for the service of existing Christians. That is not why these gifts are given. As we see God's overwhelming concern for the salvation of humanity, we must assume that His gifts are given, at least in large part, that the lost may come to know Him, whom to know is life eternal."⁶

It is a guilt-producing inaccuracy to suggest that every Christian needs to be an evangelist. In the New Testament the word *evangelist* occurs only three times (and the word *evangelism* does not occur). In each case *evangelist* refers

to exercising the particular spiritual gift and/or performing a special activity expected of only certain persons. Acts 21:8 describes Philip the evangelist. In 2 Timothy 4:5, Paul tells Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist." And in Ephesians 4:11 the spiritual gift of evangelist is introduced.

Evangelists were select people responsible to "tell the good news of victory in battle" (the Greek meaning of *evangelist*). At the same time, the New Testament has more than 100 references in which followers of Christ are to spread the good news of the Christian faith. Many evangelism approaches mistakenly assume making disciples means *telling* the good news — which is the work of the gifted evangelist. The most effective strategy for disciple making is to build on the unique gifts of each member of the Body, and develop a strategy for using those gifts — in concert — to share the love of God. Remember, the more Christians (that is, the more parts of the Body) a potential disciple knows, the more complete his understanding of God's love.

What Is the Approach?

The approach Christians take when presenting the gospel to a nonbeliever

has a great deal to do with their results.

Evangelism. Traditional evangelism takes two possible approaches in the persuasion process. The first is a *content* approach. This approach sees evangelism as a presentation of facts the hearer needs to know to make a reasonable decision. Christians can communicate the gospel verbally, in print, electronically, or through an audiovisual medium. In this view, when believers adequately present the gospel, it is reasonable to ask for a response (that is, a decision for Christ). Any Christian can succeed in evangelism if he learns how to present the content of the gospel correctly. The relationship between the Christian and non-Christian is characteristic of a teacher-to-student relationship, with the objective being to communicate correct information.

A second approach sometimes employed in evangelism methodology is the *manipulative* approach. This approach sees evangelism as a process of using the right technique to solicit a decision. This technique could be offering an emotional appeal, or leading a person through a set of previously rehearsed questions and answers. Evangelism training, in this approach, means teaching the correct technique. With the manipulative approach, any Christian can succeed in evangelism if he learns the right persuasive approach. The relationship between the Christian and non-Christian in this approach is characteristic of salesman-to-customer, the objective being to get a positive decision.

Disciple making. This approach to the persuasion process is *relational*. In this approach conversion is the result of a genuine relationship of caring, listening, sharing, and trusting between the Christian and non-Christian. The disciple-making

Evangelism or Disciple Making?

approach takes considerably more time than the other approaches. It assumes that the love of God's people is the most accurate expression of God's love. This approach assumes that since every non-Christian is different, one pre-planned and pre-canned approach will not work in every situation. In the relational approach, any Christian can succeed if he learns how to love. The relationship between the Christian and non-Christian, in this approach, is characteristic of a friend-to-friend. The goal is to allow God's irresistible love to be experienced.

A seminal research study considered whether there was a relationship

The assimilation of a newcomer into a church needs to begin long before conversion.

between how a Christian viewed the evangelistic process and the subsequent result of his evangelistic endeavors.⁷ The study isolated three groups of subjects (240 people in each group) who received an evangelistic presentation: the first group were those who, in response to an evangelistic presentation, made a Christian commitment and subsequently became involved in a church; the second group were those who had made a commitment, but had no ensuing church involvement; the third group were those who did not positively respond at all to the evangelistic presentation. The results were startling. Seventy percent (169 of the 240) of the now Christians and active church members (group one) came to their faith through a Christian who employed a relational approach (friend-to-friend). In contrast, 87 percent of those persons (209 of 240) who made

a verbal commitment but did not join a church (group two) came to their decision through a church member who viewed evangelism as manipulative (salesman-to-customer). The 75 percent (group three) who did not convert (180 out of 240) had heard the gospel from someone who saw evangelism as sharing content, facts, and theology (teacher-to-student). This study seems to indicate that a manipulative approach to evangelism (salesman-to-customer) results in the greatest percentage of persons making a verbal decision. However, the dropout rate of such an approach is 8 of every 10. As previously mentioned, the goal

of evangelism can affect the method. If the goal is to get a decision, the manipulative method apparently

works best. But this approach seems to be counter-productive if the goal is making disciples.

What About Assimilation?

In a few evangelistic approaches, a person's eventual church involvement is not a critical factor to "success," and evangelizers leave the results to God. Such approaches assume that the Great Commission will be fulfilled when everyone has heard the gospel. Most evangelizers, however, express a genuine desire that their converts become involved in a congregation. Assuming this is their desire, what are the differing assumptions about how new believers are assimilated into a church?

Evangelism. The assumption is that the foundation for active church membership is a *common faith* between the new believer and other church members.

Disciple making. The assumption is

that the foundation for active church membership is a *strong relationship* between the new believer and other church members.

Numerous church growth studies indicate that the primary reason people remain involved in their church is the friendships and relationships they establish with other members. When people do drop out, the reason is usually a *relational* issue, not a theological one. One study found that 81 percent of dropouts left their church because they "did not feel a sense of belonging." When asked what would be most important in their search for a new church, 75 percent said "the friendliness of the people."⁸ Another study found that persons who became active church members made an average of seven new friends in the church, while dropouts made fewer than two.⁹

The assimilation of a newcomer into a church needs to begin long before that person's conversion. Friendships that non-Christians develop with members of your church will play a key part in their eventual assimilation into your church. In fact, one of the most fruitful activities your church could engage in during the coming year is to help members develop or strengthen friendships with non-Christians. These relationships will have a far greater impact on your church's eventual outreach and growth than training those same people to verbally present the plan of salvation.

But a common response heard in churches is: "If we make friends with non-Christians and invite them to church it will adversely affect our Christian community."

Consider the strategy of one of the most productive disciple makers in recent history. In his ministry, John Wesley had three objectives for people: First, that they experience the grace

Evangelism or Disciple Making?

of God and the gift of faith, and become conscious followers of Jesus Christ. Second, that they become part of a class or group of believers. Third, that, upon achievement of 1 and 2, they experience growth toward Christian perfection.

It is crucial to point out that a person could achieve the first two objectives

Flavil Yeakley, a church-growth researcher who closely studied the differences between church dropouts and active members, concluded his doctoral dissertation by observing: "When people have no meaningful contact with church members in the process of their conversion, they are likely to feel no meaningful

cause for celebration — the world had finally come to their church.

People today who respond to the gospel are those who respond to the love and caring of Christ's people. People do not respond to religious opinions or theological arguments. We cannot *talk* people into the Kingdom; we *love* them in. Reflecting God's unconditional love is the essence of the gospel, for God is love. And people experience love. We have heard, "People don't care how much we know until they know how much we care." Christ taught us a great disciple-making strategy: Love God first, then love others as much as you love yourself (Matthew 22:35–40). Then He said go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19). ☺

Friendships that non-Christians develop with members of your church will play a key part in the new believer's eventual assimilation into your church.

in either order, and the more usual sequence was 2, and then 1.

That is, most people who became Methodist converts first joined a Bible study group and later became Christians. This helps explain why Wesley, in his extensive open-air field preaching, never invited people to accept Jesus Christ and become Christians on the spot. This statement may shock those whose assumptions about public evangelism have been formed in the Billy Graham era, as it might shock evangelical Christians of any generation since Charles Finney first began inviting responders to the mourners' bench.¹⁰ While Wesley's methodology does not negate the validity of giving altar calls, we can see how his methodology was a forerunner to our present discussion of evangelism and discipleship methodology.

Lyle Schaller makes a similar observation: "The ones most likely to become active members are those who become part of a group where membership in that face-to-face small group is meaningful *before* formally uniting with the congregation. They are assimilated before they join."¹¹

identification with the church after their conversion, and are therefore likely to drop out."¹²

When it comes to the idea of encouraging Christians to develop meaningful relationships with non-Christians, many churches would greatly benefit from having an abundance of pagans in their midst. Christ did not shrink from the prospect of sitting, eating, and talking with sinners. In fact, Jesus' reputation was "a friend of sinners" (Luke 7:34).

In contrast, some churches that pride themselves in their evangelistic fervor would have little tolerance for cigarette butts on church property, dirty blue jeans in the sanctuary, or cuss words in the classes. One pastor brought a teenage Christian rock group to the church for a Saturday night event. More than 700 young people from the community attended and heard the gospel, and more than three dozen indicated a desire to commit their lives to Christ. But the next morning, because the custodian had been out of town, members discovered empty beer bottles by the dozens in the parking lot. Imagine the reaction of many long-attending members! But this should have been



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CHI ALPHA:

Bringing the Sacred to America's Secular Campuses

College and university students encounter an array of fraternities, sororities, and special-interest groups whose agendas often reflect humanistic values. But for those who discover Chi Alpha, a different environment emerges.

By Scott Harrup

Mardis Gras came a few weeks before the close of the spring 2007 semester at California State University/Stanislaus in Turlock. Though not as uninhibited as New Orleans' notorious free-for-all, there was plenty of beer to go around.

A large tent among various attractions in the quad drew students' attention. The sign next to the tent read "Free Spiritual Readings." Freshmen and upper-classmen, drunk and sober, lined up for a chance to gaze into their futures. But the reception inside the tent was nothing they expected.

"We started putting up the tent a couple years ago," explains Jeremy Anderson, Chi Alpha director at the campus. "We got the idea from Will Klier at UC Davis. We prayed

with students, prayed Scripture over them, and asked God to 'manifest himself through spiritual gifts and demonstrations of His power.' "

Rather than rejecting the blatantly

Christian outreach, students wanted to learn their divine destiny. The first time Chi Alpha set the tent up, three students made salvation decisions in 4 hours.

"One Hindu girl came to Christ in immediate response to my wife's prophetic word," Anderson says.

The line waiting to get into the tent last spring grew so long Chi Alpha students dispersed to pray with people waiting to get inside.

Jeremy and Debora Anderson have made Stanislaus and three other area campuses their focus since 2004. Under their leadership, about 100

students have come to Christ — proof of an effective outreach, but only the beginning of what the Andersons want to see God accomplish among the approximately 46,000 students on their mission field. They share their passion for America’s college and university campuses with Chi Alpha teams at nearly 200 U.S. schools.

The Assemblies of God established the first Chi Alpha chapter in 1953 at Missouri State University in Springfield, formerly Southwest Missouri State University. The ministry’s name derives from the Greek phrase *christou apostoloi*, meaning “Christ’s sent ones.” The Greek letters chi (X) and alpha (A) are the initials of the phrase.

The apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:20: “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors [Christ’s sent ones], as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”

“We will reconcile students to Christ, transforming the university, the marketplace and the world,” reads Chi Alpha’s mission statement.

Tall order. U.S. colleges and universities have pulled loose from the Christian moorings on which



many historic campuses were founded. The gospel, when heard, is only one message among countless rivals. Much of academia dismisses the Bible as superstition. Students encounter an array of fraternities, sororities, and special-interest groups whose agendas often reflect humanistic values.

But for those who discover Chi Alpha, a different environment emerges.

Foundations of Prayer

At 7:14 a.m., about 50 students have gathered at Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky, to pray. They pray for each other, for their campus, and for students who have yet to encounter Christ as Savior.

Why 7:14? God promised in

2 Chronicles 7:14 to hear the prayers of a repentant, faithful people.

“There’s power in prayer,” says Mark Randall, Murray State Chi Alpha director. He has watched attendance at their primary service on Wednesday night triple to 150 over the past several years and insists prayer has made that happen.

At Stanislaus, the Chi Alpha team maintains a 24-hour house of prayer.

“Prayer is the foundation of anything we do evangelistically,” Anderson says.

Group prayer meetings energize students to take their faith onto the wider campus to pray with others. Anderson encourages this whenever he leads an outreach on the quad.

“Students will share, and after two



“Four of those guys met for an all-night prayer meeting. Word spread, and soon 80 guys were meeting to pray.”

—Eli Gautreaux



“We take our cross to a bar and set it up on the sidewalk and tell people Jesus loves them.”
—Mario Solari

or three have done so, I'll give a brief gospel presentation," he says. "Rather than try to hold an altar call in the middle of campus in the quad, we have our students disperse to offer to pray with people. Most people do not refuse prayer."

Eli Gautreaux says prayer has had an undeniable impact on the campus of Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. Gautreaux, 36, is the university Chi Alpha director and the South Texas District Chi Alpha representative. He and wife Mary have invested nearly 15 years in campus ministry. The biggest breakthrough came in 2005.

That spring, about 50 young men involved with Chi Alpha decided to move back into the dormitories and commit themselves to prayer.

"Four of those guys met for an all-night prayer meeting," Gautreaux says. "Word spread, and soon 80 guys were meeting to pray."

One night about half of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. The revival spilled onto the campus, with participating students telling others about Christ. Numbers of students made salvation commitments.

Students even held baptisms in the campus fountain.

"We're still seeing fruit from that revival," Gautreaux says.

Some 400 to 600 students gather for a weekly midweek service then participate in about 100 discipleship groups throughout the week.

Connecting, Intervening

Prayer gives way to practical ministry. Students leave a Chi Alpha prayer service determined to connect with peers in a manner that brings the gospel to life.

Mario Solari, 43, directs Chi Alpha at Florida State University in Tallahassee. Students in his group regularly visit bars to share the gospel.

"We take our cross to a bar and set it up on the sidewalk and tell people Jesus loves them," Solari says.

Jeremy Bruce encountered Solari's group one night. A student asked Bruce if he knew Jesus.

"He said yes just to get us off his back," Solari remembers.

But God began dealing with Bruce. About 2 weeks later he started coming to Chi Alpha. He eventually accepted Christ as Savior, interned with Solari,

and is now a licensed AG minister.

Eric Treuil and his Chi Alphans used a coffin during Easter 2007 to confront students with the gospel at the University of Louisiana in Lafayette.

"We called it 'Resurrection Awareness-a-thon,'" Treuil, 46, says. "The university had to give equal access because the fraternities do all kinds of 'a-thons' that week."

Chi Alpha placed the coffin on a corner of the busiest street on campus and manned it 24 hours a day for 3 days. They distributed a flyer to explain the meaning behind the spectacle. Their outreach made the front page of the local paper and was picked up by a Christian radio station.

"You're there 24 hours a day, so at 2 or 3 a.m. when students are coming back from the clubs, they see someone sitting in a coffin," Treuil says. "It kind of freaks them out and stirs good conversation."

Creative ministry tactics yield salvation decisions. But for Chi Alpha leaders and members, that is just the beginning.

"Discipleship is our focus," Gautreaux says. "Students come to know the Lord. We ask them to find other students to build relationships with and lead in groups. It's transgenerational discipleship."

Gautreaux cites four generations of believers in 2 Timothy 2:2 where Paul told Timothy to take what Timothy had learned from Paul and share that with reliable people, who in turn would share it with others.

Gautreaux sees generations of believers multiplying on and off campus. One student went home to New York last summer after accepting Christ during the school year.

"His father saw the change in his life, began to ask questions, and accepted Christ as his Savior, thanks to his son's example," Gautreaux says.

A similar scenario played out for another student going home to Houston that summer. Several family members began asking her about her faith after seeing the change in her life.

"That is what is so amazing about Chi Alpha," says Bob Marks, missionary personnel director with the national Chi Alpha office in Springfield, Missouri. "You touch one student, disciple them to share their faith, and you see a whole family and sphere of influence for eternity."

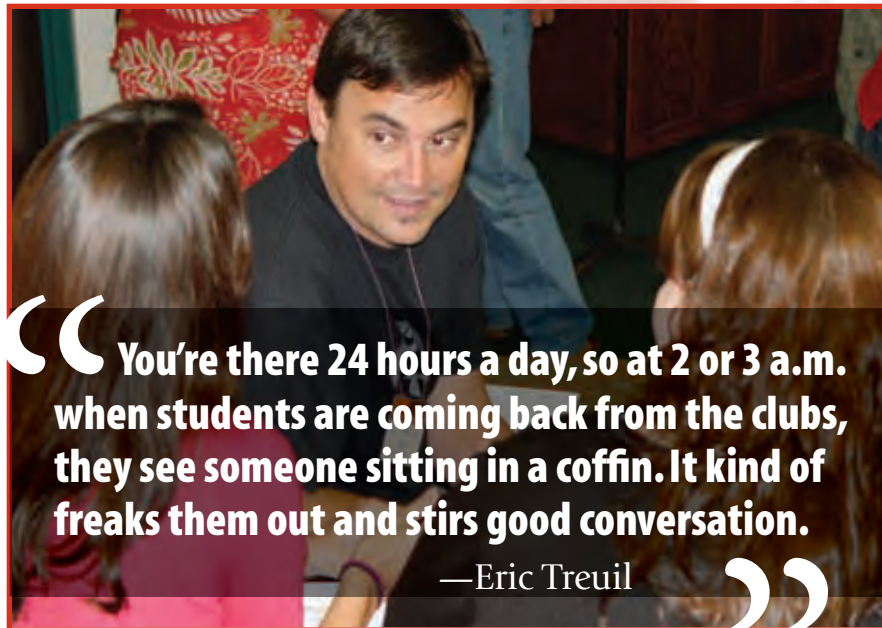
"Whatever God does in you," Gautreaux insists, "He wants to do through you."

students to Christ.

"One young lady had become pregnant and was contemplating abortion," Treuil says. "Jana called her family, and they took the young girl in with her boyfriend. They put them on separate floors in their home, helped them learn financial responsibility, and took them to church. Both came to Christ. They married and had their baby."

Expecting the Miraculous

"We look for opportunities to pray for healing," Anderson says of the Stanislaus outreach.



To create that kind of influence on campus, Chi Alphans must become integrated in campus life.

"We do everything we can to get students to live in the dorms on campus," Treuil says. "Long term, that brings the greatest fruit."

Jana Mahoney took that to heart. She had lived at home her first year at Lafayette then lived in Chi Alpha's student housing. Mahoney felt God dealing with her to move into the dorm her junior year. She led several

When one young man, a Christian student, approached a quad gathering wearing a leg brace several students offered to pray.

"Nothing seemed to happen," Anderson remembers. "He limped away."

But Edwin showed up 2 days later at Chi Alpha's weekly meeting without a brace.

"I started thinking about your prayer," he told the group, "and I felt a tingling from my head to my leg. I took off the brace."

He went to a doctor to confirm his healing and was out the following week giving his testimony in the quad.

Several years ago Randall's car was stolen when he was shopping in Murray. He filed a police report and was told he would probably never see his car again.

"There was a young man I'd been witnessing to," Randall says. "Jerry was an atheist and lived about 7 miles out of town. I got another ride and went to get him. I told him my car had been stolen and I was going to pray that God would show us where it was. 'I don't believe in prayer,' he said, 'but you can pray.'"

Randall prayed that God would let him recover his car as a witness to the student.

"I went up the highway and turned on a side road I'd never been on before," he says. "At the end of the road was my car. Jerry accepted Christ."

Short-term Participants, Long-term Growth

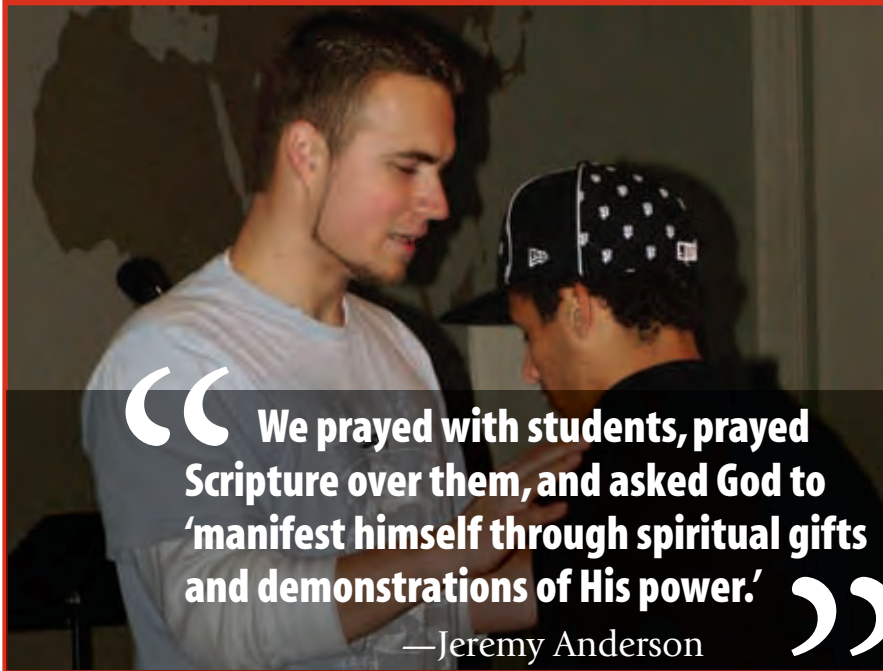
Campus ministry creates an entirely different dynamic from church planting. While families may join a church and remain for generations, student populations have high turnover.

"About every 2 1/2 years, you have a whole new group," Solari says.

Chi Alpha groups need to establish a campus presence and prove they are there to stay even as each year's classes come and go.

"Our first 7 years were feast or famine," Solari says. "I tell people to put their hands to the plow and leave the results to God."

Randall has been with Chi Alpha for well over half the national ministry's history. At 50, he is one of Chi Alpha's longest-serving directors. He started at Murray State as a student in 1974, graduated in 1977 with a bachelor's degree in criminology and corrections,



“ We prayed with students, prayed Scripture over them, and asked God to ‘manifest himself through spiritual gifts and demonstrations of His power.’ ”
—Jeremy Anderson

and received his master’s degree in human services in 1978. He started the campus ministry in 1977.

“I told God when I came to school there were two things I didn’t want to do: Be a minister and live in Murray,” Randall says. “He called me to do both, and now you couldn’t pay me enough to leave either one.”

H.L. Hussmann, 33, came to Christ thanks to Randall’s influence and is now his ministry partner.

“I came to Murray State in 1991 a nominal Christian at best,” Hussmann says. “I was reading the Bible and I called Mark. ‘I’m a little concerned I might be going to hell,’ I told him. ‘If you could help me out with that, I’d appreciate it.’ ”

“Chi Alpha was the first time I heard the gospel,” Gautreaux says. “I accepted Christ in 1990 at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, through Chi Alpha.”

Before his years at Stanislaus, Anderson, 29, was a student at American River College in Sacramento, California. He accepted Christ at a Billy Graham crusade in the city. The Chi Alpha group at Sacramento State helped him mature in his faith and discern his call to campus ministry.

Anabelle Treuil made Christ her Savior at a Chi Alpha meeting at Nichols State University in Thibideaux, Louisiana, where she met Eric.

“About 90 percent of Chi Alpha pastors were students who came to Christ through Chi Alpha,” says Solari.

Divine Provision

Ministry real estate can be scarce on a secular campus. When Treuil came to Lafayette, Chi Alpha had no facilities.

“I inherited a two-drawer file cabinet,” he says.

Today, the Lafayette chapter owns property estimated at \$1 million and completely paid for.

A local businessman paid the rent on a house for about 5 years. A non-Christian group was poised to buy the house in 1993 when the landlord offered to sell the property to Chi Alpha. The catch — Treuil had to raise \$90,000 in 90 days.

“We didn’t have the money, but we took a step of faith,” he says.

In 90 days God provided more than \$90,000 in cash from individual offerings. Pastors opened their pulpits to Treuil. One man donated a Rolex watch. A woman gave Treuil eel-skin purses to sell. About 600 people contributed.

In 2003, Chi Alpha purchased a former Lutheran church next to campus. In February 2007, Treuil made the final payment on the \$600,000 loan.

In 2007, the West Florida District donated a church on the edge of

the Florida State campus to Mario and Robin Solari’s group. The gift could not have come at a better time, since Chi Alpha had to give up on-campus facilities.

“The church had been there more than 40 years,” Solari says. “When the pastor retired, it began to dwindle and was put under district supervision.”

Solari approached district leadership to suggest a partnership.

“We have a church, annex, and parsonage, all just a 2-minute walk from campus,” he says.

Chi Alpha is using the parsonage for offices and associate staff housing. While continuing to meet on campus, the ministry will operate Mosaic Assembly of God at the church.

Worldwide Influence

U.S. colleges and universities attract students from around the world. According to Treuil, the students at Lafayette encompass some 100 nations. That is not uncommon, and this gives Chi Alpha an international mission field.

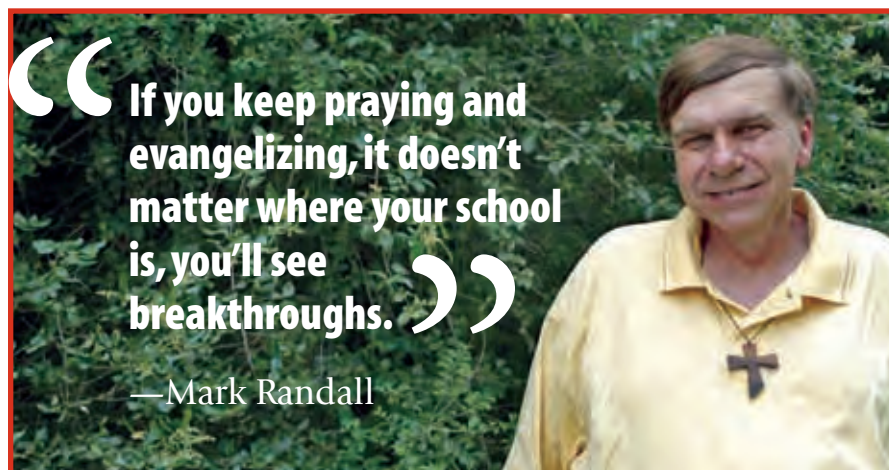
Treuil organizes a weekly lunch outreach and encourages students to invite non-Christian friends. Between 100 and 120 students take advantage of the Wednesday event, and at least a dozen new students visit each week.

One student from China came every Wednesday for weeks for the free meal.

“‘George’ was his American name, and he sat in the same place and was fascinated by the messages,” Treuil says. “At around message No. 30, he came to Christ. We baptized him in the university pool.”

Solari recalls another Chinese student who went to a Chi Alpha SALT conference in 2002 and heard an opening prayer in Mandarin Chinese.

“It was the first time Bing had heard a prayer in his language,” Solari says. “He and his wife accepted Christ and are members of a church.”



“If you keep praying and evangelizing, it doesn’t matter where your school is, you’ll see breakthroughs.”

—Mark Randall

Hussmann saw evidence of Murray Chi Alpha’s international influence during a trip to Thailand.

“About 4 years ago we ministered to a Thai student, and she got involved in our group,” he says. “In Thailand we visited her church and that day they baptized about 20 people, many of whom she had helped lead to Christ.”

Chi Alpha groups often take missions trips. Randall takes a group from Murray somewhere overseas each year. Fifty-two students ministered in the Bahamas in spring 2007.

“We helped an alumnus with a church he started in Nassau,” Randall says.

In 2006, 45 Murray Chi Alphas went to Amsterdam. More than 60 students are slated for the spring 2008 trip to Belize.

“We took a group of 15 students to Las Vegas and did street preaching and surveys,” Randall says. “‘Don’t you know this is Sin City?’ people would ask. ‘That’s why we’re here,’ we’d tell them.”

Pastor to Pastor

Every Chi Alpha director who spoke with *Enrichment* agreed the challenges of building and maintaining a campus outreach can be overwhelming.

“We’ve paid a high price for the victories we’ve seen,” Anderson says. “People have slandered our group. We’ve had some vandalism. Spiritually, there’s warfare. But we need to be relentless in the pursuit of God’s presence.”

“I have *grown* a group from 30 down to 6,” Randall admits. “In my 30 years it has been an up-and-down ride. But if you keep praying and evangelizing, it doesn’t matter where your school is, you’ll see breakthroughs.”

Hussmann agrees. “A breakthrough is always around the corner,” he insists, “and it only takes one meeting, one conversation, one Bible study, one tract put in the right person’s hand. If pastors will be diligent to get the Word of God into people’s eyes, ears, and hands, it will change lives. It’s God’s Word that does the work.”

Partnership in ministry can build a Chi Alpha outreach when churches catch a vision for lost souls on a campus.

“We have an incredible section,” Anderson says of AG churches in and around Turlock. “Local churches look for consistency on our part. They see we’re here long term.”

Gautreaux credits First Assembly in Huntsville with the rebirth of Chi Alpha at Sam Houston State.

“When I arrived in Huntsville as a young believer,” he says, “I found a church that was aware of the university mission field and wanted to reach it. Pastor Joe Barnes had been in the church 40 years and seen ups and downs in the Chi Alpha ministry. He always prayed for them. He embraced us with open arms. I’m forever indebted to him for believing in me

and encouraging me. There’s no way I would be in ministry today if it had not been for him.”

A Chi Alpha pastor’s district involvement is vital, Gautreaux says. “We have received incredible support from our district and section. They want to see what’s happening on our campus happen on other state campuses.”

Solari is a sectional secretary-treasurer. “I don’t miss any district functions,” he says. “I go to youth events. We’re partners. We need each other.”

Randall attends nearby Hope Harbor Assembly of God. Pastor Art Heinz is a former student from his Chi Alpha group and now pastors Hope Harbor with the vision of connecting his church to the critical needs in students’ lives.

“Pastor Heinz came to a congregation of about 80,” Randall says. “The church now attracts about 350 people, and 75 to 100 of them are our students.”

Heinz likes to remind Randall that Murray State’s Chi Alpha group only had six members when Heinz joined, but that all six are now in full-time ministry.

“We need to be missional in our mindset,” Gautreaux says. “The Lord has given us the privilege of seeing people come together for a short time on a university campus and then be sent out by us. The real fruit comes when we are faithful even with a small group of students but realize there can be great long-term effects for the Kingdom when they are sent out. We have this revolving door, and it’s a good thing.”



SCOTT HARRUP, associate editor,
Today’s Pentecostal Evangel



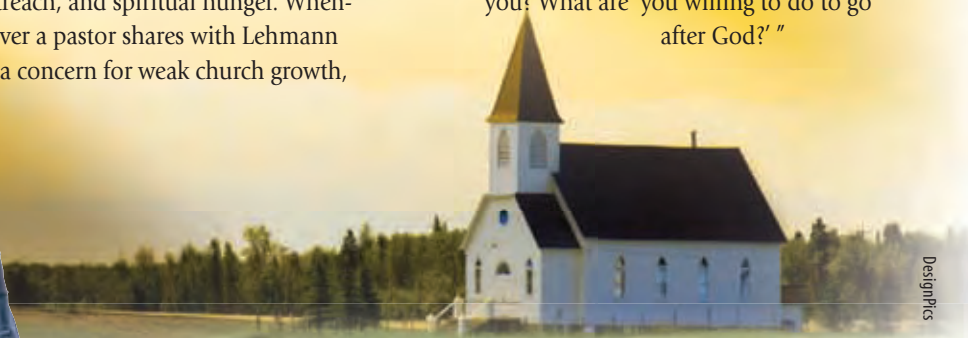
Lehmann

Receiving All That God Has for Your Church

BY MARK LEHMANN

Lehmann, pastor of Cornerstone Church in Bowie, Maryland, encourages churches to catch a vision for their God-given potential through prayer, obedience, community, world outreach, and spiritual hunger. Whenever a pastor shares with Lehmann a concern for weak church growth,

Lehmann asks, "Are you hungry?" "The reply is always the same," Lehmann says. " 'Yes, I'm hungry.' And I always follow up with another question: 'How hungry are you? What are you willing to do to go after God?' "



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The Holy Spirit and Evangelism

BY DON DETRICK

"Successful evangelism requires more than just a program or strategy," says Don Detrick, secretary-treasurer of the Northwest district. "It requires intentionality forged with compassion through the flame of the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit works at each person's point of need. The 21st-century church needs the



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Spirit's empowerment for relevant witness, a "voice of reality in a world of virtual reality." The minister relying on the Spirit will see every person is within reach of God's mercy and grace.



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How Married Adults Can Minister to Single Adults

BY DENNIS FRANCK

Dennis Franck leads the AG Single Adult Ministries Department and has observed firsthand churches' tendency to marginalize singles in favor of married congregants. "Many single adults are not attending church," Franck says, "because of the perception, whether intended or not, that church ministries are directed mostly toward married adults and families." Franck reminds readers of the biblically outlined ministry role singles play and calls on families in the church to support and serve the singles among them.

Photos.com



BY MAURY DAVIS

What is the secret to church growth? What makes an effective pastor? Pastors flock to seminars that promise to provide them with the answers to these questions and the tools to make their churches grow. And they often expect instant results.

Pastor Maury Davis has discovered six things that have brought Cornerstone Church in Madison, Tennessee, consistent church growth

over the past 14 years. He states, "The road has not been easy, and the road ahead has some dangerous curves." But the six truths he is offering are indispensable steps to church growth.

What Makes a Good Leader?

BY T. RAY RACHELS

As a district superintendent, Rachels is convinced the ministry is "no place for lone rangers, ball hogs, or for having a case of spotlight fever. Servant

is the operative word for Christ followers." Rachels connects the team spirit of nationally recognized coaches with the fundamental call in Scripture for all believers to value other members of the body of Christ. Every ministry task, no matter how successfully executed, relies on the contributions of many behind-the-scenes partners.



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Pastoral Leadership Means Sharing Your Life Message

BY RICK WARREN

Saddleback's Pastor Rick Warren is characteristically purpose-driven when he asks, "Will anyone be in heaven because of you? Will anyone in heaven be able to say to you, 'I want to thank you. I am here because you cared enough to share the good news with me'?" To respond affirmatively requires life ministry in the areas of personal testimony, life lessons, godly passions, and the gospel. All vital in "short time to share your life message and fulfill your mission."



When a Child Dies

The wise pastor will acknowledge that for parents who have lost a child, life will never be the same.

In the natural order of life, children bury their parents. When a child's death reverses this order and confronts parents with the loss of their child, the unnatural circumstances of their loss aggravate their pain. In my 40 years as a therapist, some of my greatest challenges and most agonizing moments have come when trying to help parents find healing for their broken hearts after the death of their child.

For these parents and their families, life will never be the same again. The loss of their child will either leave them *bitter* or *better*, but they will never be the same. The goal of good pastoral care for families who face this sad challenge is to help them find hope and healing through the comfort of a loving God.

Healing from the death of a child is never easy. The process is much more difficult when

the child has been living at home under parental care than when he or she is older and living on his or her own. Also, the cause of death can severely complicate and retard the recovery process. Birth anomalies (including stillbirths), Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, diseases, accidents, surgical complications, kidnapping, rape, murder, and suicide are just a few of the cruel ways our children can be snatched from us. The burden of grief that follows each of these tragedies is unique and requires a slightly different path to recovery.

The more atrocious the cause of the child's death, the longer and more aggravated the recovery process is likely to be. When a child is battling a terminal illness and death mercifully ends the pain and suffering, the loss is still agonizing, but it is easier for parents to accept



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than when death comes accidentally and suddenly to a healthy child. When a molester or kidnapper kills a child, it may be years before parents can move beyond the grief of such a tragedy. Unfortunately, some never do. What follows are some common challenges in recovery that all parents who have lost a child must take if they are to move beyond their grief.

Dealing With the Loss

Along with the family, the wise pastor will acknowledge that for parents who have lost a child, life will never be the same. Any attempt to convince them you know how they feel — unless you have lost a child — will sound hollow and calloused to them. God, however, knows how they feel. He can bring them the healing they need. Here are some ways pastors can help in the process. Encourage the family to:

■ Pour out their grief to the Lord

In their grief, many parents forget that God had an only Child whom He gave to be our Savior.

The Father watched while those He desired to save cruelly murdered His only Son. God knows the grief of every parent who has lost a child. Encourage these parents to find in His *everlasting* arms a comfort that only He can give. After all, He is “the God of all comfort” (Deuteronomy 33:27; 2 Corinthians 1:3,4).

Tears are like a balm to the grieving heart. Encourage parents who have lost a child to cry as often and freely as necessary to express their grief. It will probably take from 18 months to 2 years for them to recover from the worst of their grief. In cases in which aggravated grief follows the accidental death or murder of a healthy child, recovery time can extend from 3 to 5 years. Well-meaning friends and family members may grow impatient with the prolonged grief that follows a child’s death. However, grieving parents need to know that this recovery time is normal.

Parents will need pastoral care through the entire process of their grief. How the church responds to the parents’ loss can affect their attitude toward the church for years

The more atrocious the cause of the child's death, the longer and more aggravated the recovery process is likely to be.

Practical Guidelines for Ministering to a Grieving Family

The death of a child is fraught with so many potentially explosive emotional issues it is impossible to address them adequately in the above article. The death of a child may challenge every aspect of our parental fitness. For example, stillbirths and children who die soon after birth from profound anomalies often leave parents feeling physically defective, as though they are incapable of giving birth to healthy offspring. Or, an accidental death of a child may leave parents feeling guilty for not adequately supervising their child. I have tried to focus this article on practical approaches to managing some of the crises parents inevitably face regardless of how they lost their child.

When you are responsible for the funeral of a child, covering some of the issues dealt with in this article can serve as a roadmap to recovery for grieving parents and family. This kind of information takes some of the uncertainty out of the future for them. In my experience, I have found that people are able to deal with unpleasant certainty easier than they are able to deal with uncertainty.

RICHARD D. DOBBINS, Naples, Florida



to come. People never forget those who care for them when they are hurting. Unfortunately, they never forget the people who neglect them during their pain.

The first year is the most difficult. Parents are quick to recall that this time last year the child was with them. Getting through the first year of birthdays and holidays without the child is painful. When the initial wave of grief begins to subside, reassure parents that even though life will never be the same it can be good for them again. They may resent hearing you say this, but extending this hope will encourage them to move through their pain.

I vividly recall a couple's initial visit with me after they had lost their teenage daughter in a tragic automobile accident. When I suggested that, at some point in the future, life could be good for them again, the mother could not contain her frustration. When I saw the couple several years later, however, they told me they had reached a place in which life *was* good for them again. It was not the same; nor, could it ever be. The scars of their loss, however, had transformed into memories of God's faithfulness during the years of their grief.

■ Do not try to make sense out of their child's death

Some things in life do not make sense. The death of a child is one of them. When parents try to figure out why their child has died, they are more likely to complicate their recovery than they are to simplify it.

The Christmas story confronts us with Herod's heinous slaughter of the infants in his vain effort to kill Jesus. Such a senseless outburst of violence left hundreds of parents paralyzed by grief that defied any effort to explain it.

Trying to make sense out of a child's death is usually an attempt to undo the reality after the fact. It is as though, if the parents had known what was going to happen, they could have taken steps to prevent it. This process is part of the struggle to come to grips with the heartbreaking reality of the child's loss.

■ Refuse to live in denial

Years ago I saw a couple whose only son had been killed in an automobile accident 17 years earlier. They had refused to accept the reality of his death. His room had not been touched since his death, except to clean it. Every meal they set a place for him at the table. Occasionally, they would carry on a conversation with

him as though he were there. In many respects, they had stopped living when their son died.

After hearing their sad story, I suggested that they begin healing from their son's death by ending the practice of setting a place at the table for him. This was difficult for them to do, but after a few weeks they noticed they were enjoying their meals more.

The next step out of their denial was to dispose of their son's things and turn his bedroom into a useful part of their home. This task was more challenging for them. I encouraged them to keep their family pictures of him and one or two articles that held special significance for them. These kinds of mementos help us appropriately remember loved ones, but it is never healthy to turn a room that once belonged to your now deceased child into a museum.

■ Accept the finality of the child's death

One of the most pathetic scenes in the Old Testament is that of King David pleading for the life of the child he had conceived in his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. Yet, when his servants finally informed him of the child's death, "David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request, they served him food, and he ate. His servants asked him, 'Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!' He answered, 'While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live. But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me' " (2 Samuel 12:20-23).

David knew that his life would never be the same again. However, he refused to allow his child's death to become the end of his life. Instead, his child became an eternal treasure for him, inspiring him to look forward to the time when they would be together again. A few months later David comforted Bathsheba by giving her another child — Solomon. The Scriptures faithfully record, "The lord loved him" (2 Samuel 12:24).

For many people, this is the most difficult step toward recovery. It is as though for them to enjoy life again is somehow to belittle or dishonor the loss of their child. Had David and



For many people, to enjoy life again is somehow to belittle or dishonor the loss of their child.

Bathsheba taken this attitude, they might never have conceived Solomon.

■ Keep your love for God constant through your pain

The biggest challenge parents face is keeping their love for God constant through the pain of their loss. We have God's Word that if we will love Him through *all things*, even the tragic ones, He will make them work together for our good (Romans 8:28).

This is not an easy assignment when you have lost a child. On the other hand, there are probably few, if any, other times when we need to feel nearer to God and experience more of His love. He has promised to draw near to us when we draw near to Him (James 4:8). Letting your grief drive you to God is the healthiest way you can respond to it.

Dealing With the Guilt

Pastors are better equipped to help people deal with issues of guilt in their lives than any other professional person. When a child dies, real and imagined guilt often confront parents. When a baby is stillborn or dies from a congenital disease, the mother or father may take the blame for the child's death. Whether the connection is real or imagined, the mother and father need to deal with the guilt.

If parents imagine the guilt, remind the person of Satan's role as our *accuser* and encourage him to deny Satan's accusation (Revelation 12:10). Dealing with the pain of loss is difficult. The last thing a grieving parent needs is the unnecessary burden of self-imposed guilt.

If the guilt is real and the child's death is the result of irresponsible decisions one or both parents made, you, as their pastor, will need to lead them through confession and forgiveness as outlined in the Scripture (1 John 1:7-9). You may feel that taking such a position is almost cruel. Compassionately understanding their guilt and enabling them to deal with it from a biblical point of view, however, will bring them tremendous relief.

Parents gain nothing by condemning themselves to live under a shadow of guilt for the rest of their lives because they cannot reverse their decisions. This is not what their child would wish for them. When you help them receive forgiveness from God and help them understand that their deceased child would forgive them as well, you aid in their recovery.

Dealing With Anger and Bitterness

The overwhelming nature of a child's death creates a need to fix responsibility and blame. At times, parents direct this responsibility and blame toward God. Parents may feel uncomfortable discussing their anger toward God with their pastor. Sharing moments with them when you have been angry with God, and the relief you experienced by expressing this in your prayers, will make them feel less guilty for entertaining these normal feelings.

Reminding parents of Job's trials can be helpful. By God's own admission, Job was the most righteous person in the world (Job 1:8). When he felt his treatment was unfair, Job was angry with God. He was secure enough in his relationship with God to tell Him just how he felt. Let parents know they can express their anger verbally to God. Then, encourage them to meditate on God for His comforting response to their outrage. Any tendency one parent has to blame the other needs to be mediated so their pain will drive them closer to God and each other.

Often, a parent is angry with himself. Anger turned inward can create crippling burdens of depression. At times, the threat of suicide may be evident. In such cases, the parent needs someone to carefully monitor him. You also need to make a prudent referral to a competent Christian mental health professional to provide the person with adequate care. Remind the parent that punishing himself will bring added pain to the marriage and the family. It will not replace the loss of his child.

Remind parents that their other living children also feel the loss of their sibling. Often, the other children feel neglected and undervalued when a sibling dies. Healthy parents will redirect the love they had for the child they lost into the lives of their living children. This helps bring healing to parents and comfort to their other children.

Sometimes when death suddenly snatches teenagers or older children away from parents, parents agonize over whether their child will spend eternity in heaven or hell. Remind these parents that God has put us in *sales* and not in *management*. Reassure them that their child is in the hands of God. God loves them more than anyone on earth could possibly love them. Encourage parents to leave their child in God's care. ☺



Any tendency one parent has to blame the other needs to be mediated so their pain will drive them closer to God and each other.

William Howard Durham's Focus and Priorities

This is the first in a series of articles on early Pentecostal leaders that will appear during the next 2 years. The title of the series, *Original Wisdom*, will feature short excerpts from the theological writings of Pentecostal leaders who were active during the early years of the Movement.

These Pentecostals were *original* in several ways. They were the first generation to formulate and refine what Pentecostals believe. Their work precipitated an incredible movement in Christian history.

Second, they rarely if ever stewed about what other theologians had thought or written. They were making their own way. They saw themselves largely as developing their own theology from scratch.

Finally, they were genuine and unique. Some were real characters, others were piously self-effacing, but they were all insightful and wise in their own different ways.

The common bond among these pioneers is that the words they wrote in the past are still relevant for today. Their wisdom is aged, but not necessarily dated. We can still learn from them. At the very least, they are worth remembering for the role they played in helping the Pentecostal movement through the many challenges and opportunities that arose in the early years of the last century.

William Howard Durham (1873–1912)¹

We know little of William Howard Durham's early life. His parents raised him in Kentucky where he and his family were members of the Baptist church. Durham said he never felt any real "joy or peace or knowledge of salvation"

during his time as a Baptist. He also seemed eager to get away from Kentucky. At age 17 he left home, moving first to Chicago and then quickly on to Tracy, Minnesota. In Minnesota, Durham finally turned his life over to God at an 1898 revival meeting organized by the World's Faith Missionary Association. Three years later he became a licensed preacher with that organization.

For the 5 years of his ministerial career Durham behaved much like every other itinerant holiness preacher in the country. His message was that sinners first needed to be converted. This was the initial effect of God's grace in the human heart and it provided forgiveness. These new converts, then, needed a second experience of God's grace — sanctification — which purified one's life and took away the root cause of sin.

Durham kept a hyperactive travel schedule; even his own wedding did not slow him down. During the first 3 months of his marriage to Besse Mae Whitmore, the couple covered 3,000 miles on the preaching circuit before finally settling down in Chicago.

Durham heard about the Azusa Street revival in the summer of 1906 and, in his usual all-or-nothing fashion, immediately took a train to Los Angeles to see for himself what was going on. Within days he had met William Seymour (the head of the mission), received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and returned by train to Chicago as a new Pentecostal preacher. As a result, his theological understanding of the Christian life included a third experience — the baptism in the Holy Spirit — which he added to his holiness message of conversion and sanctification.

Durham's preaching was fiery, and his reputation within the Pentecostal world spread quickly. Soon he was one of the most well-known national leaders within the Movement.



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Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center

DURHAM



At camp meeting
(in center with hand raised), ca. 1909

But inside, Durham was struggling with his own theology, especially with the holiness doctrine of sanctification. Eventually, he concluded that the traditional holiness view of sanctification was mistaken, and he reformulated his teaching accordingly. In his new theology, he blended conversion and sanctification into a single experience of the *finished work* of salvation. The saved person then received the baptism in the Holy Spirit in a separate and subsequent experience. Durham's new theology jettisoned the three-step pattern of maturation typical of Pentecostal holiness preachers and replaced it with a simplified two-step version of the Pentecostal experience: full salvation followed by the baptism in the Spirit.

Durham first began to preach this new theology in 1909, and the Pentecostal world exploded into dispute. People felt forced to choose. Everyone had to take a side. Were you for or against Durham and his message? Tensions soared and rhetoric boiled until Durham's sudden death in 1912 (most likely from tuberculosis). Even after his death, the controversy continued to shake and reshape the movement. The Assemblies of God, formed in 1914, soon became the largest and most visible Durhamite church, but many other groups and individuals were also affected by his views.

Durham was and is a controversial historical figure because his finished work theology tore the early Pentecostal movement apart. Focus on that one aspect of his life and ministry can, however, misrepresent what Durham hoped to accomplish. His passion was for evangelism, and part of his attraction to finished work

theology was that it kept the message clear. Durham offered the gospel to everyone, and too much detail and complexity could get in the way. Durham also thought that too much emphasis on experience could distract believers from focusing their full attention on Christ as the Author and Finisher of their salvation.

It is this last point — the singularity of focus on Christ — that comes across most clearly in the following selection taken from Durham's magazine, *Pentecostal Testimony* 2:2 (May 1912).

The Finished Work of Calvary — It Makes Plain the Great Work of Redemption²

"The confusion and misunderstanding in the religious world today is largely due to the fact that the simple Gospel of Christ is not taught and understood. Christ's great work of redemption is the sure foundation on which real Christianity rests. 'Other foundation can no man lay than is laid which is Jesus Christ.' If the great work of redemption and atonement wrought by Christ on the Cross of Calvary is left out, it is hard to see that Christianity is very far superior to some other religions. Satan knows this, and is leaving no stone unturned in his unceasing effort to blind the eyes of the people to this great fact. It is a fact that cannot be denied, that he has very largely succeeded in doing so. Only a remnant remain who see and cling to Christ as their personal Savior and Redeemer.

"The surest possible way to overturn a building is to remove its foundation. The basic truths of the Gospel are that Christ became a substitute for sinners and died in their stead,



Durham's preaching was fiery, and his reputation within the Pentecostal world spread quickly.



Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center

Durham appeared to have no difficulty in distinguishing the most crucial elements of faith from those of secondary concern.

and that men are saved by faith in Him. If this teaching be not true, then the whole Gospel or Christian structure is built upon an absolutely false foundation, Christ was a false teacher and an impostor and all who have trusted in Him are lost. The time has come that God will have the truth go forth and men will be called to decide one way or the other. God will have His simple, primitive Gospel preached in all the world exactly as it was in the days of the Apostles, so that all men can decide whether they wish to stand for Christ and His Gospel or for the foolish theories of men.

"This makes the battle to largely center around the glorious truth of the 'Finished Work of Christ on Calvary,' which is the most glorious and powerful truth of the Gospel. Yea, it is the very center and heart of the Gospel. When once this truth is established it clearly draws the line so that no one need be mistaken as to where he is. Thousands of people, who are trusting in morality, legality, philanthropy, humanitarianism, church membership, the brotherhood of man and the hundreds of other silly things in which men are being made to trust by false teachers who are influenced by the devil, will have their eyes opened to the fact that if the Gospel is true, all these things combined could never save a single soul. And all will be made to know that if any or all other things combined could ever save even one soul, then the Gospel is not true and Christ is dead in vain. In this decade the Gospel will be proven true. It will be confirmed by the signs that follow it. The establishment of the truth of the Gospel will explode every theory of men in existence concerning the salvation of lost men. ...

"The doctrine of the Finished Work, brings us back to the simple plan of salvation. Christ died for us. He became a substitute for every one of us; for He tasted death for every man. Here is a truth so simple and yet so great that it is wonderful. We are not saved simply because we are forgiven our sins. We are saved through identification with our Savior Substitute, Jesus Christ. We are given life because He died for us and rose again. But some one may ask, 'How do we become identified with our Substitute?' We answer, 'By faith alone.' We are condemned and sentenced to death. Christ, the Blessed Son of God, stepped in and took our place and died in our stead, thus paying the death penalty that we might go free. When the truth is preached and we tremblingly fall at His feet and cry out,

'What must I do?' The word comes back 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' This does not, as we have been taught, mean that we shall be partly saved by having our outward sins forgiven. This would not be salvation. Salvation is an inward work. It means a change of heart. It means a change of nature. It means that old things pass away and that all things become new. It means that all condemnation and guilt is removed. It means that the old man, or old nature, which was sinful and depraved and which was the very thing in us that was condemned, is crucified with Christ. This makes Christ all in all as Savior, and faith the only means by which we can become identified with Him.

"How different are the theories preached today, compared with the Gospel preached by the Apostles. On every side men are telling us today that there is no saving virtue or merit in the Blood of Christ, but that He was a very great teacher, and that He was our example of a perfect man. They deny that we are saved through the merits of His precious blood, and set at nought His blessed work of redemption. They deny His Deity and make Him a mere man. They tell us the world needs a religion of love, one that recognizes the brotherhood of all men, and that there is good in all religion. Thus they rob us of our Blessed Redeemer. They entirely rob us of the Gospel of Christ which the Apostles preached and which we find in the Bible. No religion ever taught or advocated by any one could ever teach and enjoin more love and good works than the religion of Christ. The point is that we are not taught that we are saved by these things. Imagine, if you can, one of the Apostles going forth preaching and telling men that they were to believe that Jesus was a great and good man, and that this coupled with good works would save them. A thousand times no! They declared that He was the Son of God, and that God had raised Him up from the dead. They declare that He died for our sins and that we were saved by grace through faith. They made everything to center in Christ, declaring Him to be our only hope. They exhorted to a clean, separate, holy life, fruitful in every good work, separate from the world, lived in fellowship with God, not as a means of being saved, but as a sure proof of salvation already received by faith in Christ. It has remained for modern theorists to rob the Son of God of His title of World's Redeemer,

and thus of His right to the title of Savior, leaving Him a mere man.

“So persistent has been the work of Satan along the line of deceiving the people, and blinding their eyes so that they would not see the great truth concerning the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, that, not only have the eyes of the people of the world been blinded, but a large percent of those in the churches as well. People have been made to look to so many other things that Christ has largely been lost sight of. They have turned to theories and creeds, experiences, blessings works of grace, states of feeling, standings in churches, acceptance of certain truths, and so many other things that their vision of the Blessed Christ of Calvary has been dimmed. God has sent the Blessed Holy Spirit to His Children in these last days, to witness clearly in their hearts that the Gospel of Christ, as contained in the Scripture, is true. Men, doctrines, experiences and churches have been exalted in the earth for centuries. In the end of the age the Holy Spirit has come to exalt Jesus Christ, and give Him His rightful place

in the hearts and lives of all God’s children, as well as in the assembly.”

Durham’s Original Wisdom for Today’s Minister

Durham appeared to have no difficulty in distinguishing the most crucial elements of faith from those that, while important, were of secondary concern.

1. What are the convictions at the core of your ministry?
2. How often does (or should) that core be manifest in your preaching?
3. Will all Pentecostal ministers emphasize the same core elements? Is it sometimes easier to be energetic about secondary concerns because they are more unique to one’s own thinking? 🌀

NOTES

1. Portions of this article are adapted from Douglas Jacobsen, *A Reader in Pentecostal Theology* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2006),
2. Douglas Jacobsen, *A Reader in Pentecostal Theology* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2006), 85-87.



So persistent has been the work of Satan . . . that, not only have the eyes of the people of the world been blinded, but a large percent of those in the churches as well.



Guidelines for Making Sense of Science in the Media



Discernment in matters of science begins with understanding how scientists think, how research works, and how science advances.

We live in a world of specialization. Long gone are the days of the Renaissance when Christian leaders and scholars were as versed in matters of science as they were in matters of Scripture.

Yet, science is part of our world. Scientific matters appear daily in the news and impact a pastor's life and ministry. What does the latest stem cell breakthrough mean? Should I be concerned that genetically modified crops will lead to the famines of biblical prophecy? How does research on the age of the earth fit with the Genesis account of creation? Will this new alternative health treatment help my friend who is suffering with cancer? To what degree do genes influence human behavior?

How can a busy pastor without training in the sciences learn to discern the critical issues of the day? How can he find answers to the questions posed by science in the news? Discernment in matters of science begins with understanding how scientists think, how research works, and how science advances. Guidelines for making sense of science in the media emerge from an understanding of these processes. Such guidelines can save a preacher from the embarrassment of mishandling science in the pulpit, a youth group member from the disappointment of having his inaccurate apologetics discredited by a science teacher, and a seeker with a technical background from the disillusionment of feeling that the church misunderstands science. Here are some basic things a pastor needs to know to address scientific matters wisely in his ministry.

How Scientists Think

From astrophysics to zoology, scientists in all fields of inquiry use the same framework for reasoning — the *scientific method*. The scientific method is an iterative process. At any point in the research process a scientist may need to repeat steps when faced with new information. These series of steps start with the scientist posing a question about something he can observe and measure. What is the circumference of the earth? Which pathway controls cell growth in response to a hormone signal, pathway A or pathway B? Does this gene predispose people to obesity?

After a scientist defines his question, he does background research to gather the best information and resources for preparing his research plan to answer the question he posed. This step also ensures that the scientist does not repeat mistakes from the past.

With the enhanced understanding of his research topic that has come from his gathering information, the scientist is ready to construct a *hypothesis*. A hypothesis is a tentative explanation for how things work that a scientist can test by further investigation; it is the scientist's educated guess in answer to the question he posed. For example, a scientist's hypothesis might be that the earth is round. Next, he designs and conducts an experiment to test whether his hypothesis is true. In a properly designed experiment, the scientist should only change one variable while keeping all other conditions the same. In addition, the scientist needs to repeat the experiment several times to ensure that the first results were not just an accident.

Once all the experimental data has been collected, the next step in the scientific method involves analyzing the data and drawing a conclusion concerning whether or not the hypothesis was correct. Scientists often find that



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their hypothesis was false. In these instances, the scientist will construct a new hypothesis and begin the process of the scientific method again. If a scientist finds that the hypothesis is true, he often decides to test it again in a new way, restarting the steps of the scientific method. Thus, the conclusions drawn about the experiment ideally should serve as a launching point for new hypotheses.

The final step in the scientific method is communicating the results. Publication of the data and conclusions in an appropriate scientific journal enable other scientists to use the new results when they gather background information for designing their own new experiments.

What guidelines for making sense of science news emerge from our understanding of how scientists think? First, we must think carefully about how a scientist draws conclusions from a given set of results. For example, because two variables correlate to each other does not imply that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between the two. This idea often is stated: *Correlation does not imply causation*. An example often used in college statistics courses to illustrate this principle is the correlation between a city's ice cream sales and the number of reported drownings. Ice cream sales are highest when the rate of drowning is highest. This correlation, however, does not mean that increased ice cream sales make drowning more likely. Instead, the hidden variable is that hot summer weather increases both ice cream sales and the number of people swimming and thus exposed to the risk of drowning.

An example of the importance of remembering that correlation does not imply causation exists in brain structure research. Suppose the size of a certain brain structure varies in relation to the presence of a certain human behavior. In the absence of more information, we do not know whether the size of the brain structure affects the behavior, the behavior causes the change in size of the brain structure, or a hidden variable creates the correlation between size and behavior, with no cause-and-effect relationship between size and behavior. Discovery of a correlation between two variables may mean that a scientist needs to study the relationship between those variables in greater detail by conducting more experiments.

The need to confirm a result by other experiments, preferably conducted by another group of researchers, is another important guideline

for interpreting science news. Thus, while news of any new breakthrough is certainly interesting, until the discovery holds up under the light of further research, caution needs to prevail.

Finally, we need to realize that assumptions made in the study can often affect the conclusions scientists draw on a set of data. If the scientist has incorrect assumptions, he will also have flawed conclusions. Research performed by someone who has a vested interest in the outcome may lead to *bias* in the conclusions drawn from the experiments. Check the sources and sponsors of a research study. While sponsored research can be of high quality, knowing who is behind the research can be enlightening.

How Research Works

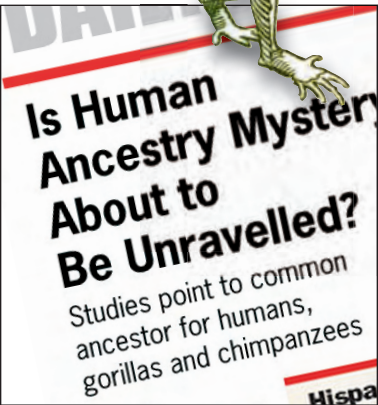
The image of a scientist working alone in a laboratory that has been popularized by Hollywood could not be further from the truth. Scientists conduct their work in the context of community. Scientists in universities raise money for conducting research by writing to government agencies and charitable foundations asking for grants. These grant applications are peer-reviewed, meaning that fellow scientists familiar with the field evaluate these applications. Scientists receive funding for the best research. After receiving grant money, a scientist needs to write follow-up progress reports and submit proposals to have the grants renewed.

When a scientist completes a research study, he usually submits a manuscript detailing his research results and conclusions to a scientific journal. The editors of these journals then send this research paper to one to three scientists for review. These reviewers usually remain anonymous to the author. Reviewers may recommend modifications or additional experiments that the scientist needs to complete prior to publication, or they may advise against publication in the journal. This process serves to enhance the overall quality of scientific literature, cutting down on obvious errors and faulty reasoning. Publication in prestigious scientific journals leads to more grant money to do more research.

The peer-review process is not perfect. Sometimes this system can suppress controversial topics or interesting but unusual topics of study from gaining attention in the scientific community. Yet, the peer-review process is widely used in science. The scientific community considers it inappropriate to announce one's



We must think carefully about how a scientist draws conclusions from a given set of results.



Christians who develop apologetic arguments must ensure their information reflects current scientific thinking.

work in the popular press before submitting that work for peer review.

Once you understand how research works, guidelines for evaluating science in the news will include checking the source of the scientific information you are intending to use. Make sure the results and conclusions you reference come from sources published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. A press release from a public relations department does not carry the same weight as publication in scientific literature. For example, watch out for manufacturers of alternative medicine treatments who make health claims based on research not yet subjected to the peer-review process.

One way a pastor can keep abreast of challenging new developments in the sciences is by making use of the concept of peer review in his ministry. Peer review presupposes that the most qualified person to judge a certain piece of research is the person who conducts similar research to the work under review. In the same way that an editor at a scientific journal seeks the opinion of an expert in the field, it is wise for a pastor to cultivate friendships with those who have the appropriate technical background and seek their input when attempting to make sense of a scientific news topic.

How Science Advances

One interesting study alone is not enough to validate a new scientific idea. Scientists must

conduct other studies that build on and expand the initial study. In the same way, we should not trust an interesting data point unless scientists can repeat the results. Scientists must also repeat interesting studies, preferably a different group of scientists than the ones who made the initial finding.

Most of the time, science is self-correcting because of this approach. Even if falsified results make it through the peer-reviewed publication process, further studies will expose the results as false. When the body of evidence becomes overwhelming, new paradigms emerge.

Scientists often construct theories that serve as frameworks to bind together many different specific hypotheses into a coherent structure. Thus, theories in science are much more than educated guesses. Theories can aid in the formation of new hypotheses as well as placing current hypotheses into a greater context of understanding. Sometimes new theories replace old ones in science, but usually a new theory expands on knowledge beyond the old one. For example, Einstein's Special and General Theories of Relativity expand on Newton's theories, addressing phenomena that Newton was not able to observe, such as the astronomically large, the minutely small, and the tremendously fast.

The guidelines for making sense of science in the media that emerge from understanding how science advances include the following: Studies that have been repeated and confirmed by others need to be viewed as more trustworthy than studies that have only been performed once. In addition, while new discoveries are exciting, not all will stand the test of time. For example, many hurdles stand between the clinical use of human embryonic stem cells to treat Parkinson's disease and an initial finding that mouse embryonic stem cells can be directed to differentiate into dopamine-producing neurons.

Another helpful guideline that comes from understanding how science advances is to make cautious use of research findings more than a few years old. Apologetic arguments based on scientific thinking even a decade ago may seem laughably outdated to today's science educators.

Since scientific thinking is constantly advancing, Christians who develop apologetic arguments must ensure their information reflects current scientific thinking, not an old



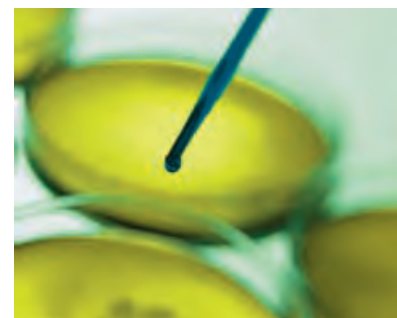
hypothesis that the scientific community has modified or even discredited. Youth workers and campus ministers must be diligent to check out any such apologetic materials for current relevance before teaching them to students who may suffer grave disappointment when their high school teacher or college professor reveals the errors in their apologetic.

Words of Encouragement

Even after applying all the appropriate guidelines for making sense of science in the media, you may still get it wrong from time to time. If you do, be willing to admit your mistake when confronted by a knowledgeable teenager in your congregation who is an expert in the area of your mistake. Even the best scientists at Harvard make errors now and then. During my doctoral training in the sciences at Harvard, I learned one of the most important phrases to memorize and use freely when needed: "I don't know." Pastors can also powerfully use this phrase in ministry settings. Sometimes our best response to questions about science

and faith is to admit that we might need to do more research before producing an answer in a field outside our knowledge. Undoubtedly, the person who asked you the question you could not answer will respect your honesty and appreciate that you did not attempt to offer a potentially inaccurate response.

While avoiding the discussion of scientific topics altogether may seem tempting in the face of exponential scientific advances, your congregation needs your guidance in navigating the ethical implications of today's scientific breakthroughs. I am encouraged to see pastors increasingly willing to seek input from Christians in their congregations who have technical backgrounds and then tackle the difficult issues of our day. As the Bible encourages us in 1 Peter 3:15, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." Through prayer and preparation, you can be ready to make sense of the science in today and tomorrow's news. 🌱



Sometimes our best response is to admit we need to do more research before producing an answer in a field outside our knowledge.

A Son Wrestling With the Faith

No one's heart is beyond the reach of the Holy Spirit.

Q: My husband and I are troubled because our son seems to be rejecting our faith. We have been in full-time ministry since he was born, and he has always been enthusiastic and involved in church activities. Since adolescence, he has become increasingly distant and hostile toward us, his required church attendance, and church people in general. When we try to talk with him about these issues, he becomes angry and withdraws. We are worried about his mysterious behaviors. What can we do?

A: It is incredibly difficult for Christian parents to observe their child as he wrestles with faith and values in a battle for his soul, especially when we seem to be losing ground. The pain is compounded when you have committed to full-time ministry and have continually prayed for God's protection and blessing on your children. As your faith is tested, many unanswered questions emerge. Unfortunately, there are no quick answers or easy solutions.

While parents are responsible for raising their children in loving and biblical ways, each person must work out his own salvation. Parents often take too much responsibility for the outcomes of their children. *Where did we go wrong?* seems to be the ever-present question when a child wanders from faith. It is true that parents are responsible for loving, teaching, nurturing, and correcting. In the end, however, our children will answer to God for their own choices.

Adolescents will question their faith. In fact, they need to. Since adolescence is a time of defining personhood, they must push away from their parents and move toward defining themselves. They must take ownership of a personal faith and decide what values will define their lives. Children will push away at varying intensities depending on their personalities,

determination, and the amount of resistance they meet.

Prayer is the one resource always at your disposal. Scripture reminds us of the power of bringing our petitions before God. No one's heart is beyond the reach of the Holy Spirit. Prayer will also help you learn to let go rather than trying to control your children's future. In communion with the Lord, He will remind you to release your child to Him. He can make himself known to anyone in any situation.

There are, however, some things a parent can explore and examine. Ask, *Why is my child resisting what we have taught him?* If there is a reasonable explanation, perhaps there is a reasonable solution. Have people or situations in the church hurt him? Does he feel the expectations others have for him are too high or unattainable? Has there been a specific turning point, such as a major church conflict or upheaval in the family? In these cases, family dialogue and honest communication are important. Give your child a chance to express himself freely and validate his feelings. Most adolescents complain that parents do not listen well. Choose to speak less and listen more.

It may be difficult to face, but some ministry children feel resentful toward either one or both parents because of their ministry involvement. They may also become resentful when exposed to the details of church drama and conflict. Have they felt neglected, unimportant, and marginalized? Do they feel that members of the congregation have mistreated their parents?

If any of these are true, discuss them with your teen. If you have contributed in some way to your child's anguish, an honest acknowledgment, a sincere apology, and a change in behavior are important. If you need outside assistance, seek help through counseling or



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advice from trusted confidants.

Find opportunities to spend time with your child without bringing up conflicts. When tense issues become the topic of every interaction, the atmosphere can become unpleasant and strained. Either parent can initiate one-on-one time, making it pleasant, safe, and fun. Give undivided attention to your teen and his legitimate interests. Listen carefully to spoken and unspoken words; draw him out by asking questions. In a relaxed setting, answers might come concerning what is prompting your child toward the choices he is making.

At times, parents may need to use drastic responses to combat destructive choices. If an older adolescent sets this course, tough love becomes important and crucial. Hold him accountable for his actions. You will need a great deal of support as well as objective input in this situation.

A child is an incredible gift from God. We gratefully receive our children from His hand. We love, nurture, and teach our children about God's love so we may release these gifts back to



Him. Even as we realize that our responsibility is fragile and fleeting, we also realize that God is ultimately in charge of our children's lives and future. 🙏

If you have questions you would like Gabriele to answer, e-mail them to: enrichmentjournal@ag.org. You can also mail your questions to: Q&A for Pastors' Wives, *Enrichment* journal, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802-1894.

At times, parents may need to use drastic responses to combat destructive choices.

The HIP FACTOR in Preaching

You need to know something about me. I have given up all hope of ever being hip. There it is, out in the open. It is actually liberating, sort of like when psychiatrist Leo Marvin's *death therapy* cured Bob — a development Marvin later regretted when Bob married his sister. In fact, sometimes I wonder if there are too many hip people.

Do you ever find yourself trying to keep up with the hip Joneses, only with your church and preaching instead of houses and cars? Does being hip ever seem like just another rat race? If you preach as part of your calling, do you ever feel the pressure to up the ante of cool in your preaching?

I do not oppose creativity that is outside the box, the cool factor in preaching — high-end marketing, creating interest in your community with highly effective branding of your series, or any other technique that connects with today's generation. It is essential that preaching be true and clear concerning the text, and interesting and relevant to one's listeners. But here is the truth about today's (emerging) culture: Today's generation values substance and authenticity more than any other qualities you might bring to the table.

Some of my friends who are members of today's generation have schooled me over the last several years. They wait for me at the tops of climbs when we go mountain biking.

They sacrifice their own love for speed on the trails for the sake of a relationship with someone whose sole

mountain biking goal is not to drop dead of a myocardial infarction. One of my twentysomething friends developed a Facebook site for me. I am still not a fluent Facebookie. But this same friend got on my site and pretended to be me, creating quite a stir on my behalf. Our mutual friends now know him as pseudo-Oss. This is an interesting way to express affection. But it worked.

My friends have taught me an important lesson through these experiences: Substance matters more than style to today's generation. People, even those who are hopelessly unhip, matter more to them than self-gratification. This generation is on a journey to find transcendent truth that still connects with real life. They hate the facade, but love the reality. They are suspicious when a sermon or a worship service strikes them as contrived, slick, or touched up. Even those who do not know Christ have deep appreciation for Christians when we become even more Christlike, more biblical, more spiritual, and more authentically like Jesus. They have shown me these values in the trenches, where it really counts.

Ministry Advice From Paul

When the apostle Paul was facing his own imminent death, he decided to write one last letter to his protégé, Timothy. In 2 Timothy we have the last known words of Paul to his son in the faith. Paul knew that this letter was his last opportunity to communicate with Timothy (compare 2 Timothy 4:6–18). The concluding section of the letter (4:9–22) is a miscellaneous collection of personal thoughts and needs. The final section of the main body of the epistle is found in 3:1 through 4:8. Here we read the last words of Paul to Timothy as the curtain fell. If you could give one final word of advice to your child, what would you say?

Paul's Advice to Timothy About His Personal Life

Paul first explained the condition of the emerging culture Timothy would face in ministry and everyday life (3:1–9). Say what you want about postmodernism and the emerging culture today (keeping up with today's culture



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is a good and necessary thing), Paul nailed it 2,000 years ago. There is nothing modern or postmodern about the human condition. Today's emerging culture probably began emerging when Adam ate the fruit.

Paul's first piece of pivotal advice to Timothy is his antidote for postmodernism in relationship to Timothy's personal life (3:10–17). His antidote is for Timothy to live by what he believes (3:14–17). That is always the test, isn't it? A person's life reflects his beliefs.

The way to respond to postmodernism is to base your life even more squarely on the truth of Scripture, because only Scripture can impart the wisdom necessary for salvation and right living (3:15–17). Paul told Timothy to let Scripture, not the emerging culture, form his character and lifestyle. This is the way to redeem culture. Enjoy life with a biblical passion. Treat everything as God's gift rather than self-destructing by twisting life to the point of depravity (3:1–9).

Paul's Advice to Timothy About His Preaching.

The second piece of pivotal advice is Paul's antidote for postmodernism in relationship to Timothy's ministry life, especially his preaching. He warned Timothy that he would eventually face a church so influenced by emerging culture that it would turn away from the truth of Scripture and accept a compromised message that gratifies the cravings of the listeners (4:3,4). Those who lead these churches will preach messages aimed at achieving popularity with people rather than with God (verse 3). Paul would probably be supportive of a church that wants to be relevant to culture and connect well with people, as long as its top priority is to be a Jesus-friendly church. But Paul did not speak subtly of a church that turns away from sound teaching.

The antidote for postmodernism in relationship to ministry is to preach the Word (4:1,2,5). Paul listed several characteristics of preaching that he admonished Timothy to heed. First, someday Timothy will face God and give an account for his life (including his preaching, compare verse 1). Second, Paul instructed Timothy to preach the Word whether it is popular or not (whether it is "in season" or "out of season," verse 2 leading up to verses 3,4). Third, Paul encouraged Timothy to preach messages that challenged people to more authentic living for Christ (verse 2). Finally he told Timothy to preach the Word "with great patience and careful

instruction" (verse 2), while being consistent and levelheaded in all he did (verse 5).

Paul's Advice for Today's Pentecostal Preacher

What would this advice sound like today? Perhaps something like this? Timothy, you work for God, not man. Love people, but remember that you work for God. With the increasing opposition to the gospel in culture, and even in the church, live an even more transparent and deeply biblical faith than ever before. Preach from the Scriptures, carefully explaining what the Bible says about Jesus and life. Many people who do not follow Christ will respect you for your good life and your honesty about the truth claims of Jesus. Even if they never agree with the claims of Scripture, many people will respect you for explaining to them carefully and accurately what the Bible says. Do this with enormous patience. Keep your wits about you, understanding that your message may sometimes be unpopular. But no matter what difficulties you face, keep preaching, Timothy.

Today's generation would value Timothy deeply if he followed Paul's advice — whether he were cool, hip, young, old, or mid. As long as he is for real in his love, and a speaker of Truth, his preaching would connect.

Today's generation is on a journey. Your careful, patient preaching of biblical life principles has God's power to lead people on the journey to follow Jesus Christ. ☺

The way to respond to postmodern is to base your life even more squarely on the truth of Scripture.



Self-leadership: Leading From the Inside Out

Say the word **leadership** at a roundtable of **spiritually gifted leaders** and chances are the conversation will immediately turn to the task leaders perform in leading others. Church leaders spend most of their week leading. Yet, in our effort to become better leaders, we often overlook the biggest leadership challenge we will ever face — ourselves.¹ We tend to neglect managing ourselves because self-leadership is much more difficult than leading others.²

Hardly a week goes by without our hearing that another leader has been disqualified from leadership. We blame this failure on sexual compromise, financial impropriety, the desire for power, or poor leadership. Those failings, however, are only the public symptoms of a deeper personal failing. If we look into the problem further, we usually discover that the leader neglected his personal life.

In his book *Leading From the Inside Out*, Samuel Rima states: "The way in which a leader conducts his personal life does, in fact, have a profound impact on his ability to exercise effective public leadership. There is a direct correlation between self-leadership and public leadership."³

The New Testament writer, Paul, understood this concept well: "I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:27).⁴ Paul understood that to be all God had called him to be he needed to consistently keep his life in order.

Importance of Self-leadership

Leaders must care for, nurture, and manage their personal lives. In leadership circles, this is known as self-leadership. Effective leaders must invest more energy into developing their own leadership skills than in developing any other area.

Leadership expert Dee Hock suggests that self-leadership needs to occupy 50 percent of a leader's time.⁵ What would happen if church leaders took Hock's recommendation seriously and invested half of their week into self-leadership? To become the healthy leaders God desires us to be, we must develop personal mastery of our own lives.

Character Formation


Understanding personality and giftings, clarifying values, pinpointing strengths and weaknesses, improving communication skills, and effective time management are all important areas where leaders need to focus their energy. While there are dozens of facets to self-leadership, none are as critical as the leader's character. Without character, leaders have nothing. Our character defines us. Only after we determine who we are can we know how to grow. For the Christian leader, character is the ballgame.

The absence of strong moral character will shipwreck a leader. Financial blunders can be repaired. Poor communication can be fixed. Leadership decisions that do not work out the way the leader promised can be salvaged. But character flaws can destroy a leader. Recovering from moral and ethical compromise is often impossible. Once trust in a leader is lost, it is rarely restored. People will only follow leaders who express the highest level of integrity.⁶

Andy Stanley says it clearly: "We are always one decision, one word, one reaction away from damaging what has taken years to develop."⁷ Twenty or 30 years of faithful service to God can be destroyed with one compromising decision.

When a leader's flawed character is exposed, the problem usually stems from his lack of integrity. Integrity is being on the inside who you claim to be on the outside.

Erwin McManus uses an analogy about a



Effective leaders must invest more energy into developing their own leadership skills than in developing any other area.



ERIC D. RUST, lead pastor, Cedar Hills Church (Assemblies of God), Sandpoint, Idaho

watermelon to describe integrity.⁸ You have probably bought a watermelon. As you stand in the produce section holding a watermelon, the only thing you can see is the watermelon rind. You thump the rind, and if the melon sounds hollow you buy it. When you check out, you spend your hard-earned cash on a watermelon when you can only see the rind. When you arrive home and cut open the rind, what do you expect to find inside? Watermelon. You trusted that the melon had integrity. What if you cut open the rind only to find a banana inside? That would never happen because a melon has integrity. A watermelon is always on the inside what it claims to be on the outside.

What about you? If someone peeled off your outer layer, what would he find? Would he find on the inside what you claim to be on the outside? Here we find the one advantage a watermelon has over people — by its nature, a melon has integrity. Integrity does not come naturally to people, even to leaders. It must be developed.

Leaders who practice self-leadership are keenly aware of the inconsistencies in their lives. Rather than ignoring these inconsistencies while they are small, they choose to align who they are with what they believe. They understand that life cannot be compartmentalized into tiny boxes. We have been created as whole beings. Who we are in private cannot be isolated from who we are in public.

As leaders, we must decide who we want to be and then align our lives so we become just that.⁹ This is not easy because the person you do not want to be is the person you will most naturally become if left to your own devices. Jesus said: "If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it" (Matthew 16:25). Self-leaders must die to the natural tendencies inside them to become who God is calling them to be.¹⁰ God is calling us to become inside-out leaders — leaders who are defined more by who we are on the inside than by who we seem to be on the outside.

Because of the titles and perks church leaders often receive, it can be easy for pride to sneak into their lives. When church leaders fall victim to sexual sin or power plays, pride is often at the root. Romans 12:3 reminds us, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment." First Peter 5:5 cautions us: "God opposes the proud but favors the humble."

Church leaders stay grounded and reminded of who they are when they practice the spiritual

discipline of servanthood. When leaders are on their knees in service or have the serving towel draped over their arm, they are reminded that Jesus found His greatness in servanthood. Jesus never prided himself on His godliness; He found His status in servanthood. In His smallness He became great. Smallness and servanthood may not naturally be comfortable words for leaders, but they are words our Leader was comfortable with.

Acknowledging our weaknesses is another excellent way to keep pride at bay. Many leaders are unclear of their strengths and weaknesses. Admitting weakness requires personal security and humility.¹¹ Leaders who practice self-leadership readily acknowledge their weaknesses. Instead of entertaining pridefulness by covering up their weaknesses, they admit them and invite others who have complementary strengths to help them manage their weaknesses.

Safeguarding Our Character

Church leaders must be masters of themselves because the stakes are too high. For business leaders, dollar signs hang in the balance. For church leaders, future ministry and eternity hang in the balance. As sad as it is to see a business or political leader fall victim to his own neglect, the price is always higher when a church leader falls.

Pat Williams, Christ-follower and vice president of the Orlando Magic, offers six ideas for safeguarding our character.¹² These six guidelines serve as a useful grid for the church leader who desires to lead himself with excellence.

1. Take time for consistent reflection and restoration of body and soul. Many church leaders maintain such a fast pace in their ministries that they find little time for themselves. Jesus modeled soul restoration by routinely leaving the crowds to spend time alone with the Father. Self-leaders create time on a regular basis to pray, journal, and read. A well-ordered heart is the best gift a leader can give his followers.

In addition, leaders need to take care of their bodies. Physical health is a blind spot for many pastors. The Bible challenges us to honor God with our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:20). Good health provides the energy and stamina to actively pursue God's call. Eating well and exercising regularly should be a part of every leader's lifestyle.

2. When faced with an ethical choice or a temptation, consider the example you set for others. Think of all those who are watching you — children, friends, mentorees, and church members. How will your decision impact them? With church

A watermelon is always on the inside what it claims to be on the outside. Are you?





Lone rangers risk burnout much more than leaders who are in relationships that provide accountability.

leadership comes the sacred gift of moral authority.¹³ Our moral authority can be lost in an instant. When temptation knocks, we must ask ourselves if saying yes to temptation is worth hurting those who look up to us.

3. Make yourself accountable to a small group of trusted friends. Lone rangers risk burnout much more than leaders who are in relationships that provide accountability. Self-leadership is too big a job to be done alone. Leaders need to invite a small group of people whom they know and trust to check in with them regularly and ask the tough questions. All of us can lie to ourselves so often that eventually we begin to believe our lies. Friends are not as easily duped.

4. Focus on integrity, not image. Leaders who cultivate their inner life will consistently rise above situations in life that would attempt to pull them down. Dr. Robert Terry, author of *Reflective Leadership*, observes that “the profound challenge in ourselves is authenticity — being true and real in ourselves, in our relationships, in the world.”¹⁴

5. Grow deep in your faith. As Christ-followers, we believe God’s Spirit has the power to bring spiritual change to human hearts. Character development is too difficult a task for us to accomplish without the involvement of God’s Spirit. Nurturing our relationship with Christ and staying in tune with His Spirit keeps us dependent on the activity of God in our lives. The deeper we go into God’s love, the deeper our love for others becomes, and the greater protection from evil we experience.

6. Deal firmly and uncompromisingly with character flaws and hidden sin. All leaders have a dark side. Some are people pleasers. Others desire to build a name for themselves. Some leaders have anger issues or codependent tendencies. These issues will affect a leader’s ability to lead. Bill Hybels asks leaders: “Who is responsible for resolving your interior issues so your church won’t be negatively impacted by your junk? You are.”¹⁵ Spiritual leaders must sort these things out. Our churches are depending on it.

Conclusion

On the final page of his book *The Next Generation Leader*, Andy Stanley poses a great question: “What small thing in my life right now has the potential to grow into a big thing?”¹⁶ Poor character does not appear out of nowhere. It starts small — so small it is often not even noticeable. Eventually the small thing that was once unnoticeable becomes a huge thing that controls a leader’s life. Just like cancer in the human body, the best time to remove poor character is when it is still a “small thing.”

In God’s infinite wisdom He has chosen to place the future of the church in the hands of leaders. He has done so with clear expectations. He desires us to be exceptional leaders. He wants us to hone our leadership skills, to communicate effectively, and to manage our teams well. But above all that, God’s desire for His leaders is that they would be masters in the art of self-leadership. ☺

NOTES

1. Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 182.
2. Dee Hock, “The Art of Chaordic Leadership,” *Leader to Leader* 15 (Winter 2000): 20–26. Accessed from <http://www.pdff.org/leaderbooks/L2L/winter2000/hock.html> on 13 April 2005.
3. Samuel D. Rima, *Leading From the Inside Out: The Art of Self-Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 27.
4. Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, unless otherwise noted. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.
5. Hock.
6. Hybels, 189.
7. Andy Stanley, *The Next Generation Leader: Five Essentials for Those Who Will Shape the Future* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), 119.
8. Erwin R. McManus, *Uprising: A Revolution of the Soul* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), 70.
9. *Ibid.*, 81.
10. Pat Williams and Jim Denny, *The Paradox of Power: A Transforming View of Leadership* (New York: Warner Books, 2002), 98.
11. Stanley, 22.
12. Williams and Denny, 125.
13. Stanley, 117.
14. Williams and Denny, 127.
15. Hybels, 192.
16. Stanley, 132.



Organizational Development and the Church Part Two: Developing Leaders Through Community

During my work in the church and the business sphere, I have experienced and observed the power of small clusters of hungry learners as they unleash leadership.

Jesus demonstrated how isolation does not birth or sustain leadership. One of His first acts of ministry was to identify 12 future leaders. He poured His teachings into these disciples and demonstrated His power among them. He eventually gave them opportunities to practice and reflect on what they were learning.

In Acts 6, these same disciples, along with the church in Jerusalem, effectively organized an incubator of leaders known as deacons to serve various practical needs of the growing Christ-following community. This was a powerful demonstration of the vital tension between learning and application and between *being* and *doing*.

"We have found that the biggest problem in training and teaching people is to get them to use what they've learned," observes Ken Blanchard, author of *The One-Minute Manager* and founder of the organization, Lead Like Jesus. "We've been struggling with how you close that *learning-doing* gap. One way is to train teams together, rather than a leader going off somewhere. Train them together so, while they are working together, the examples they can use to apply what they are learning can be things they are working on anyway. The application starts right away."

Communities of Practice

Part 1 of this series (see Winter 2008 *Enrichment*, page 136) asserted that the living *systems*, known as churches or businesses, face the constant challenge of identifying potential leaders in their environments, and on zeroing in on such persons — whether staff or volunteers — and on knowing how to develop their talents and

skills. A portion of these candidates need to be veteran leaders, since true servants and professionals never stop growing.

Some churches or organizations have moved toward a formal *leadership development track* in which the church takes an identified group of leaders through intentional learning and application assignments throughout a designated period. Others develop leaders more on the fly, in the crucible of daily activities that carry out the mission of the organization and intersect with various heat-of-the-moment crises.

In recent years the church has come to label this regular gathering of existing or emerging leaders as the *small group*. Its structure has ranged from Sunday School, to home-group Bible study, to standing church committees. Its application has varied from fellowship, to discussion of topical issues, to intense Bible study, evangelism, or missionary work, or to a combination of these.

The small-group philosophy ranges from being just another *program* of the church to representing the DNA of the congregation. Is yours a church *with* small groups or a church *of* small groups? Again, the innovations of today's small-group ministries stand on the foundation of Jesus' model and other historical utilizations, such as John Wesley's use of *societies* to disciple new believers and hold them accountable for spiritual growth.

In the business arena I have observed the use of the newer phrase, *leadership community of practice*, to describe a group of younger or veteran leaders facilitated by a senior executive. For example, in my current role as an organizational development practitioner with a health-care organization, I assemble practice groups of 10 to 12 corporate directors to discuss key issues and challenges facing the company. We often use certain books or articles

Jesus demonstrated
how isolation
does not
birth or sustain
leadership.



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as launching pads for discussion. We ask these directors to collaborate on action steps for addressing these opportunities. We expect them to report at the next session how they have followed through and applied the action steps and learning points from the previous discussion.

"Humans struggle to apply what they know is right," asserts Paul Litten, an Atlanta-based graduate of Southeastern University, a former leader with InterVarsity, and now a founding partner with a leadership consulting company called Healthcare Performance Solutions. "There's a gap between what people know to be optimal leadership behavior, decision making, care and support of employees and direct reports, strategic planning — and their everyday practice. One of my favorite quotes that we have been using in our work is C.S. Lewis' statement that 'human beings need less to be instructed as much as they need to be reminded.'

"Leadership training and development," Litten continues, "is about trying to help a person understand a new concept, practice, or perspective — and put it into practice on a regular basis.

"Churches can spend resources, time, and dollars to create more effective leaders, but don't see improvement in their spiritual leadership, key metrics, team effectiveness, and employee engagement," he notes. "Let's not start our training strategy around the question, 'How do we create great training?' We start with a different question: 'How can we fundamentally change behavior?'"

For example, Litten's consulting group meets with senior executives of an organization and asks them to identify the key leadership competencies needed for success. He then builds training curriculum around those crucial needs and brings together heterogeneous *learning teams* of about six or seven people.

"The learning team stays intact for an entire year of training facilitated by a senior leader who has had some development and training on the subject," Litten points out. "They help participants mine the learning and apply it. The focus is how they can apply this learning as quickly and effectively as possible toward real-time issues. Remember, our goal is performance, and our strategy is development of essential competencies."

In Litten's method, each group member is assigned an accountability partner with whom they commit to connect for a minimum of 20 minutes every 2 weeks.

"There are two things they need to discuss when they meet. First, share how they are applying what they have learned in real-time situations. Two, talk about any obstacles or struggles they are having in applying the learning, and peer coach each other on how to do a better job with that," Litten says. "Once a month, for 50 minutes, learning teams meet and do two things. They share how they are applying their learning, and share any roadblocks or challenges they are having. The goal is to use a community of practice to continually reinforce application. It's had tremendous impact on an organization."

According to Litten, churches do not need to limit such communities of practice to senior leadership. A congregation could build a curriculum or program around the attributes needed for people to be spiritually healthy and make an effective impact on others. "It's about clarity in the church's mission and what must be driven into its people to help fulfill that mission," Litten says.

Examples From Churches

Rod Loy pastors the 95-year-old North Little Rock First Assembly of God, which averages 2,300 worshippers each week and offers numerous nonconventional ministries. The congregation has undergone what the pastor calls "a unique metamorphosis" during the past 6 years. Small groups are a key vessel for leadership development and team building in his church.

"In student ministry, we have *class pastors*. Starting from when youth enter sixth grade, two volunteer lay youth pastors move with them all the way to their first year in college. Those people become their pastors," says Loy. "The coaching, developing, and training of class pastors happen in the small group. They are essentially a youth ministry staff, with all the responsibilities of a full-time youth pastor."

Loy continues, "On the other end of the spectrum I have 'Rod's Lunch Group,' which is six or seven guys from different businesses. We get together and troubleshoot stuff in the church. I'll e-mail them and say, 'Help me figure this out.'"

"It's the strangest group. We have a vice president of a Fortune 500 company, a general manager of a water park, a customer service representative, and a regional manager of a copying company. We get together for relationships and fellowship as well."

Hardly a committee-driven church, North



"There's a gap between what people know to be optimal leadership behavior ... and their everyday practice."

— Paul Litten



Developing leaders through community is more contingent on relationships than formal curriculum.

Little Rock assembles teams for short-range projects or events, and Loy empowers the leader to draft his team members.

"We continually form and re-form groups," Loy says. "For example, Catalyst is a group of young adults who are growing with our young adult pastor by studying together. Right now they're studying how the principles of Starbucks® apply to the church and young adult ministry."

John Lindell, lead pastor of James River Assembly of God in Ozark, Missouri, has organized the six couples comprising his executive leadership team into an engaging small group. Lindell and his wife, Debbie, host the group each month for a meal and a time of planning and development.

"It encourages and inspires them, and provides them a lift," Lindell says. "My hope is that what they're getting from me, they are taking to the people they are leading."

Lindell's method of developing his leaders through this community is more contingent on relationships than formal curriculum. "I'm less concerned about studying a book than I am sharing my heart with them, while especially drawing in the spouses. They are hearing from us, we're hearing from them; that exchange of information and heart has a unifying effect. Spiritual development happens along the way, but my biggest concern is maintaining the unity, so we have one heart, one passion."

During Lindell's 16 years of ministry at the church, James River has grown from about 90 persons in weekly worship to approximately

12,000. The staff consists of 100 full-time employees, including 15 pastors. A regular staff chapel focuses on developing attitude and outlook, emphasizing where the church is heading and how.

"In the midst of our growth, we had become somewhat fragmented," Lindell admits. "Departments were doing their own thing; the church had become more like an apartment building than a house. There's real strength and synergy when people come together."

Randy Valimont, senior pastor of Griffin First Assembly of God in Griffin, Georgia, utilizes every Monday morning to facilitate 30 to 45 minutes of leadership lessons with his staff. They also spend a similar amount of time together in prayer several other mornings during the week.

"Each one of our pastors gets paid based on two things," Valimont says. "No. 1 is their job performance; but No. 2 is their showing us that their ministry has brought at least 10 families into the church. They then need to plug them in and begin to develop them as leaders."

"Twice a month these staff pastors invite a few of these spiritual seekers to their home for dinner," Valimont says. "One of our staff pastors teaches divorce recovery. Even though this is open to the community, he develops relationships, begins to mentor people, and walks them through their difficulties. He becomes a life coach to them. Eventually, they get plugged in to the church."

Valimont meets with five young business leaders every Thursday morning, mentoring them spiritually, and talking about leadership

 Pontius' Puddle

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principles they can enact in their marketplace arenas. "We talk about how we conduct ourselves in a godly manner in an ungodly world," he says.

Griffin's average weekly worship is approximately 4,000 people, with about 1,500 participating in a Sunday School program conducted as small groups. The youth program, with a class of about 100 students led by 10 adults, focuses on leadership development.

"We have found that if a person can come into our church and find two friends within the first 2 months, we will keep him," Valimont notes. "Getting people plugged into a small group enhances that possibility. In our case, we have a group leader and an assistant leader. The leader raises up an assistant when he sees someone who begins to apply himself. When the group grows to about 20 or 25, they split in half. The assistant takes someone with him to be his assistant and begins training him."

Identifying Leaders

Jesus had a unique and powerful ability to discern whom God was preparing for key leadership roles. But how can a church identify its emerging leaders in the midst of so many distractions and competing motivations?

"I have found that the people who volunteer for leadership may not always be the best leadership material," Litten observes. "Church staff and board members need to be clear on the spiritual leadership competencies they feel the church needs. This clarity is the first step to knowing what to look for to find latent talent or emerging leaders.

"The church's second step is building a strategy for developing the behaviors desired in such talented people. The third step is extending an invitation to those who possess leadership competencies and behaviors, then having a structure that is easy to plug people into," Litten advises.

"Many churches lack spiritual middle management," he notes. "There's a small cadre of senior leaders, then a group of people who are hanging out at church, doing their own thing in their own world. Where are the people who have simple gifts, who can lead small groups and participate in other aspects of ministry, and who can help people go from baby to teenager to adulthood in their walk? How do we push it down to the laity as much as possible? In other words, if someone wants

to be a leader, is there a clear path to leadership in my church?"

Partnering With Technology

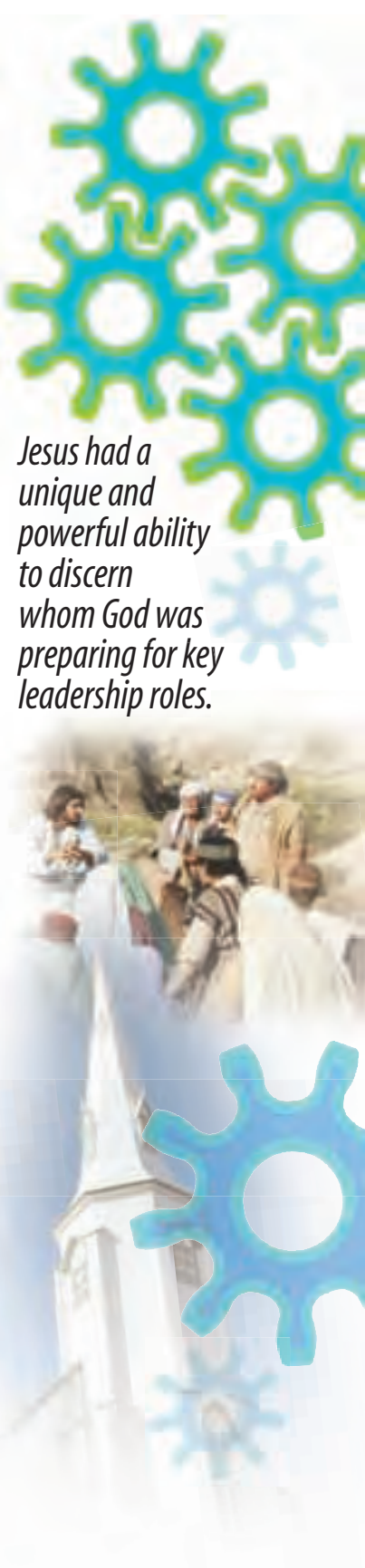
Newer Internet technology provides opportunity for these small communities within the church to stay connected beyond their regular meetings or one-on-one follow-up discussions among members. This improves the speed and quality of discipleship. Blogs or message boards designed exclusively for a group permit the discussion and learning to continue without depending on people's schedules. E-mail is another vehicle for staying in touch whenever it is convenient.

Cell phone text-messaging enables the savvy group facilitator to provide real-time learning experiences by sending a short insight or action suggestion to a member where ever he happens to be. This also can be a quick and effective tool for a spontaneous gathering of the practice group to address an urgent need or opportunity.

"Blogs are great for us, especially for a group, such as the class pastors, that is scattered in different areas," notes Loy. "We form private blogs that are password protected. Someone will post a topic or question, and everyone will interact on that thread to find a solution without their needing to get together or text a message. We also use text messaging a great deal. We've learned that within two or three age groups, text messaging is our most efficient means of dialogue. We get an instant response, as compared to e-mail. Such modes of connection and communication are *fun* and have huge advantages," Loy adds.

"They also make it so much easier to get a group together. Someone might be sitting at his desk at work; someone else might be in a hotel in Chicago. You get real-time interaction without everyone needing to drive to the church," he notes. "However, we don't resolve conflict that way."

Whatever the format, method, or technology, the careful gathering of potential or existing leaders to learn and practice bears timeless value for churches and organizations. Having discussed the urgency of recognizing a church or business as a *system*, and the constant need to intentionally develop leaders who engage that system within the context of community, my next article will examine the crucial development roles of both coaching and mentoring. 🌐



Jesus had a unique and powerful ability to discern whom God was preparing for key leadership roles.



Fact is, the ministry is hurting hundreds of pastors' wives every year.

Protecting Your Spouse

Recently a pastor's wife e-mailed me and asked if I would call her husband. She wanted me to encourage him because he was under tremendous stress in his ministry. As I traded e-mails with her I realized that her husband was not the only person struggling. This minister's spouse was having a hard time dealing with the effects ministry life was having on her family and marriage.

I wish this problem were unique; but, the fact is, the ministry is hurting hundreds of pastors' wives every year. I consistently hear from pastors who say their wives have just about given up on the ministry and, sometimes, even on God. In preparing to write this article I talked with several people in ministry. One person asked, "What do you mean 'protecting your spouse from the ministry'?"

My answer, while not trying to sound condescending, was, "If you have to ask, you probably don't understand."

Unless you have experienced the hurt and pain of ministry, you probably do not realize how much life in the trenches can hurt. Most pastors I spoke with quickly agreed this is an important topic because they have experienced it in their own marriage. Since ministry deals with people and relationships; and, because people are often broken and hurt by the world, the work of ministry will often injure those who are trying to provide pastoral care.

I have discovered there are certain things a

pastor can do to protect his wife from the ministry or keep her from getting hurt as they minister to others.

Spend Consistent Time Alone Together

One of the most frequent mistakes a minister makes is allowing the ministry to take his personal time with his family. There are times when the pastor's family needs to understand the obligations of ministry, but his family should also know they come first in his life, second only to God. As much as possible, I try to give my family my first attention when planning my schedule for the week. This includes setting aside one day a week as family day.

Allow Your Spouse To Freely Express Her Feelings and Emotions About the Ministry

A pastor's spouse often feels she must keep quiet about her concerns for fear she will only add to the burdens of her already over-burdened husband. Hidden emotions can be dangerous because they later lead to burnout, frustration, and even depression. One pastor's wife I know never feels comfortable discussing her struggles with her husband. Because of this there is a part of their relationship that is not as close as it could be.

Limit Unnecessary Hurtful Information

While a pastor needs to be open and honest with his wife concerning what is happening in the ministry, he needs to limit unnecessary hurtful information. If someone says something negative that is untrue and has no potential for future problems, a pastor should probably dismiss it as untrue and not share this with his wife. When a pastor is under stress, he tends to think things are more negative than they were intended. Passing negative information and feelings along to his wife only adds to her frustration.

I once heard someone say something negative concerning my wife's absence at a church function. I knew that my wife was faithful to attend everything she could and that the church as a whole believed this. I did not see a need to share this comment with my wife.



RON EDMONDSON, Mustard Seed Ministry, Clarksville, Tennessee

Keep Your Spouse From Surprises as Much as Possible

If a pastor knows trouble is on the horizon, he needs to keep his wife informed by telling her the truth. He does not need to share every half-truth and gossip he hears; but, if there is a problem brewing in his ministry, his wife should not be the last person to hear about it. One pastor I know had a group of deacons causing him trouble. His wife heard about it at the grocery store. It caused tremendous stress in their marriage.

Develop Healthy Relationships With Others

A pastor and his wife need to develop healthy relationships with others inside and outside the church. Sometimes when a family is in the ministry it seems that life revolves around the church. If there are issues or struggles in the ministry, the minister and his wife often have no one to turn to for support.

Developing healthy relationships take time away from the ministry, but the relationships can prove vital during times of crisis. I regularly meet with other Christian men outside the church. I consistently receive encouragement, strength, and accountability from these men. My wife has discovered this is true in her life as well.

Grow and Mature in Your Faith

A pastor and his wife must be growing and maturing in their faith. Whether through conferences, Bible studies, mentoring relationships, or personal time with the Lord, the couple that is growing in Christ will be building a stronger marriage and will be better prepared for the stress of life and ministry. In my counseling with ministers and their wives, I have found the best defense against the devil's schemes is a strong, growing relationship with Christ. When personal growth is suffering, a pastor and his wife will have a harder time dealing with the pressures of ministry.

Schedule Opportunities To Get Away From Ministry

A pastor and his wife need to schedule opportunities to get away from their ministry. I have found that every few months my wife and I need a break. It may be overnight or for a couple of days, but that time away has proven valuable in protecting our marriage.

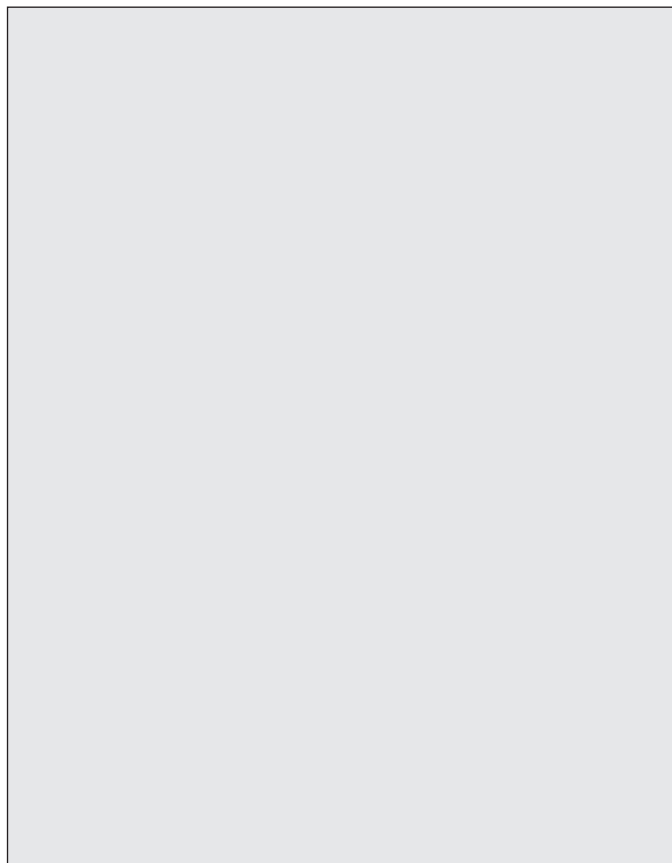
During a recent stressful time in ministry I sensed the toll it was having on my wife and our marriage. Having worked with couples for years through marriage struggles, I instantly knew that what I was doing had to change to protect my home. I quickly scheduled some time for us to be away, and we discussed the issues facing us in the church. While we had not grown apart in our marriage, I could tell that my wife needed special attention from me. We spent time talking, praying, studying God's Word, and simply relaxing. When we returned we were better prepared for our ministry, and I had the needed safeguards in my life to keep our relationship strong.

Conclusion

I realize that my first call in life is to God and my relationship to Him, but He has also blessed me with a partner. I must be careful to honor and protect her from the toils of ministry. The more I protect my wife from ministry damage, the more she is able and willing to support me. 🙏



A pastor and his wife need to schedule opportunities to get away from their ministry.





■ Isn't It Time for Jesus as Savior?

ROBERTA L. BONNICI, Chesapeake, Virginia

TEXT: MATTHEW 1:21

INTRODUCTION

The world needs a Savior — one who intervenes when a situation is out of control. The definition of save is to rescue or preserve.

The results of sin are all around us. Jesus came to deliver us from the destruction of our own ways. As Savior:

MESSAGE

1. He loves the lost.

- a. He seeks them out (Luke 19:1–10).
- b. He rejoices over their repentance (Luke 15:7,10,32).
- c. He weeps over their hardness (Luke 19:41–44).

2. He lifts the fallen.

- a. He offers pardon (John 8:10,11).
- b. He offers peace (Luke 7:44–50).
- c. He offers promise for the future (John 21:15–19).

3. He liberates the captive.

- a. He commands demons to go (Luke 4:33–36).
- b. He takes control over infirmity (Luke 13:11–13,16).
- c. He conquers death (Luke 8:49–55).

CONCLUSION

“What must I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 16:30,31). To believe means to enter a relationship based on truth — to give yourself entirely to Him in faith. Go His way. Take His hand. Now is the time (2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:15).

■ The Power of Christ's Resurrection

HARDY W. STEINBERG

INTRODUCTION

The apostle Paul received tremendous revelations of divine truth. He had been blessed with exceptional spiritual experiences such as being caught up into the third heaven. Yet, after years of walking with God, he longed to understand better the power of Christ's resurrection (Philippians 3:10). How much more do Christians today need to pray as Paul did!

MESSAGE

1. Results in the believer's justification.

- a. Christ was crucified for our offenses and raised for our justification (Romans 4:25). This was foretold in the Old Testament (Isaiah 53:6–11) and illustrated by the ceremony of the scapegoat (Leviticus 16:7–10,15–22).
- b. If Christ had not been resurrected, all people would still be in their sins (1 Corinthians 15:17). The Resurrection indicated that the sacrifice of Christ on the cross completely satisfied the demands of God's justice. The Resurrection is the assurance of the believer's salvation (Romans 10:9).

2. Provides power for victorious living.

- a. Believers, apart from divine enablement, cannot live victoriously (Romans 7:18–24). For this reason God provides the strength to overcome weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9,10).
- b. Paul prayed that the Ephesian Christians might understand that the same extraordinary power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in and through believers (Ephesians 1:19,20). Because of this power, believers can, in spite of adversity, be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). Paul's life was an illustration of this (1 Corinthians 15:30–32).

3. Guarantees resurrection of believers.

- a. Like the first sheaf of the harvest given to the Lord as a token that the entire harvest belonged to Him (Leviticus 23:10–20), Christ's resurrection is the token or guarantee of the resurrection of all believers (1 Corinthians 15:20–23; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).
- b. In the resurrection, believers will have bodies like Christ's glorified body (1 Corinthians 15:49; Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:1,2). Christ's post-resurrection appearances hint at what our resurrection bodies will be like. They will be recognizable (1 Corinthians 13:12) and yet as different as a kernel of planted corn is from the stalk that follows (see 1 Corinthians 15:35–38).

CONCLUSION

Because of Christ's resurrection, believers have hope not only in this life, but also in the life to come (1 Corinthians 15:19; 1 Timothy 4:8).

■ In Remembrance of His Peace

WARREN MCPHERSON, Springfield, Missouri

TEXT: JOHN 14:25–31

INTRODUCTION

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).¹

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:13,14).

In John 14:25–31, Jesus speaks of five things concerning himself and His mission:

MESSAGE

1. He speaks of His ally — the Holy Spirit (verse 26).

- a. “He shall teach you all things.”

- (1) The Christian must always be a learner.
 - (2) The Holy Spirit will lead us deeper and deeper into the truth of God.
 - (3) There is never an excuse for a Christian to have a closed mind.
 - (4) Anyone who feels he has nothing more to learn has learned nothing about the Holy Spirit.
- b. "And bring all things to your remembrance."
- (1) In matters of belief, the Holy Spirit constantly brings back to our remembrance the things that Jesus said.
 - (a) We must discover the truth.
 - (b) We must discover the meaning of the truth.
 - (2) The Holy Spirit will keep us in matters of conduct.
 - (a) In moments of temptation.
 - (b) In moments of danger.
 - (c) In moments of discouragement.
- 2. He speaks of His gift — peace** (verse 27).
- a. The biblical word for peace, *shalom*, never means the absence of trouble. It means everything that contributes to our highest good.
 - b. The peace the world offers.
 - (1) Escape.
 - (2) Avoidance of trouble.
 - (3) Avoidance of facing things.
 - c. The peace Jesus offers. In:
 - (1) testing (John 16:33).
 - (2) conquest (Romans 14:16–19).
 - (3) confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).
 - (4) trouble (Philippians 4:7).
 - (5) a world gone mad (Hebrews 12:14; Romans 8:6).
- 3. He speaks of His destination — the Father** (verse 28).
- a. Released from the limitations of this world.
 - b. Restored to His former glory.
- 4. He speaks of His struggle — the Cross** (verse 29).
- a. The end of His mission. "It is finished" (John 19:30).
 - b. His final battle with the powers of evil.
- 5. He speaks of His vindication — triumph** (verse 31).
- "More than conquerors" (Romans 8:37).

CONCLUSION

"Arise, let us go hence" (John 14:31). Dare we do less?

NOTE

- 1. Scripture passages are KJV.

The Kind of Mothers God Wants

STEVE D. EUTSLER, Springfield, Missouri

TEXT: LUKE 2:41–52

INTRODUCTION

Mary models the kind of mothers God wants.

MESSAGE

- 1. As a person. God wants:**
 - a. grateful mothers (Luke 1:46–55).

- b. faithful mothers (Luke 2:41–51).
- c. thoughtful mothers (John 2:1–10).

2. As a parent. God wants:

- a. mindful mothers (Luke 2:43–48).
- b. tactful mothers (Matthew 12:46).
- c. merciful mothers (John 19:25–27).

3. As a pilgrim. God wants:

- a. mothers to be heedful (Luke 1:38).
- b. mothers to be mournful (John 19:25).
- c. mothers to be prayerful (Acts 1:14).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, allow me to say again:

- Follow her example as a person.
- Follow her example as a parent.
- Follow her example as a pilgrim.

Changed and Yet Not Changed

JOHN F. WALKER

TEXT: LUKE 24:13–48

INTRODUCTION

The disciples had been with Jesus for 3 years. Nevertheless, they did not, at first, recognize Him after His resurrection. But He did make himself known to them. Their sadness and their dashed hopes had clouded their vision.

MESSAGE

- 1. He is the Christ of intimate fellowship.** "He talked with us on the road" (verse 32).
 - a. We need to listen.
 - b. When we pray, we need to realize that we are talking with a real Person.
- 2. He is the Christ of intelligent scholarship.** He "opened the Scriptures to us" (verse 32).
 - a. The Scriptures were His delight. They were fulfilled in His life, death, and resurrection.
 - b. He is the key to the Scriptures.
- 3. He is the Christ of infinite worship.** "Were not our hearts burning within us?" (verse 32).
 - a. What is true worship? (John 4:23,24).
 - b. We need burning hearts and impassioned lips (Psalm 39:1–3; Jeremiah 20:7–9).
 - c. We expect excitement in other things, why not in our faith and worship?
 - d. Have you lost the joy of being a Christian? Jesus can give you joy.

CONCLUSION

I offer you a risen Christ to:

- a. turn to for intimate fellowship.
- b. learn from for intelligent scholarship.
- c. burn for in infinite worship.

Book Reviews

The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church To Reach a Changing World

ALAN J. ROXBURGH and FRED ROMANUK (*Jossey-Bass, 219 pp., hardcover*)

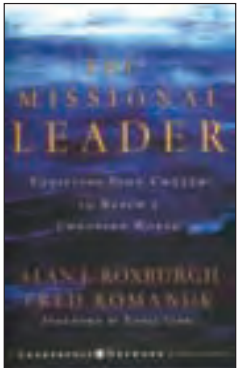
Transitioning a congregation from lethargy to vibrancy requires a leader with the patience of Job, the diplomacy of Daniel, and the wisdom of Solomon. Most pastors might conclude the task is beyond their skill level.

In *The Missional Leader*, the authors provide helpful clues that will assist pastors in effectively guiding their congregation from stagnation to mission. When a church community shifts from a stable, consistent, predictable cultural context to an environment of discontinuous change, individuals in the church will struggle to grasp the realities of the ministry context their church faces. According to the authors, though, "Missional leadership cultivates an environment in which the people of God imagine together a new future rather than one already determined by a leader."

Understanding the realities of this cultural context provides the platform for a dialogue between church members and the missional leaders who are actively engaging with the scriptural text. Some leadership models assume the leader gives direction and the people simply follow those directives. But *The Missional Leader* provides a model where the leader dialogues with the people to help them understand Scripture in light of the context of their local ministry. This model assumes the Spirit of God is among His people and not restricted to the primary leader.

The missional leader seeks to transition a congregation of anxious individuals seeking solace and security into a community that can participate in forming Kingdom witness. This occurs when the people are led to examine the Scripture, apply it to their life context, and work together to involve the congregation in fulfilling the mission of the church.

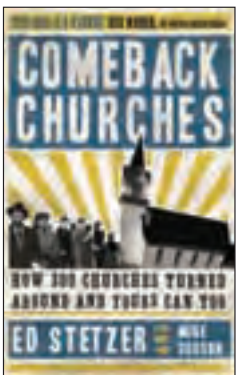
— Reviewed by Steve Tourville, Pennsylvania-Delaware District superintendent, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.



The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church To Reach a Changing World



Discontinuous change is dominant in periods of history that transform a culture forever, tipping it over into something new.



Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too

Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too

ED STETZER and MIKE DODSON (*Broadman and Holman, 224 pp., hardcover*).

According to *Leadership* journal, "85 percent of churches in the United States have plateaued or declining attendance." That is approximately 340,000 churches.

I am not worried for two reasons. First, I know that God wants churches to grow. Second, God has provided plenty of tools to help churches grow.

One of those tools is *Comeback Churches*

by Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson. This book identifies five crucial issues in revitalizing your church: leadership, vibrant faith, lay ministry, intentional evangelism, and celebrative but orderly worship.

Church revitalization requires strong, change-oriented leadership from pulpit and pew. To make a comeback, your church needs the right people in the right jobs doing the right things.

Leadership is not everything. Members of comeback churches must also have faith

characterized by a personal commitment to Jesus and the church's mission, a servant's attitude, and strategic prayer.

In revitalized churches pastors have limited roles and invite laity to exercise their God-given ministries. The entire church is involved in intentional evangelism, gradually incorporating unbelievers into the community, and then into the faith.

Finally, comeback churches have celebrative but orderly worship services. More often than not, their musical style is contemporary, and they do everything with excellence.

Read *Comeback Churches* and you will discover that your church's best days are still ahead you.

— Reviewed by George P. Wood, pastor,
Living Faith Center, Santa Barbara, California.

A Reader in Pentecostal Theology: Voices From the First Generation

DOUGLAS JACOBSEN, ed. (Indiana University Press, 226 pp., paperback)

Jacobsen is distinguished professor of Church History and Theology at Messiah College. He has provided 16 writings from the immediate-pre-Pentecostal era to documents from the 1920s. Within this historical framework, Jacobsen believes all the significant contours of Pentecostal theology can be found. Nothing dramatic has transpired, in his judgment, since that era. These writings are representative of all the major sub-groups within the early modern Pentecostal revival, ranging from Maria Woodworth-Etter (1894), through a variety of holiness Pentecostal leaders, to those who shaped non-Wesleyan Pentecostal theology (where the Assemblies of God fits). Jacobsen has included key players in major controversies, such as the New Issue, or the Oneness movement, as well as the contribution of F.F. Bosworth, whose rejection of the initial physical evidence doctrine disturbed the Pentecostal movement in 1918.

In the introductory chapter is a most lucid and perceptive definition of what it means to be Pentecostal. The historical sketch of the origins and early development of Pentecostalism is concise and accurate, clearly capturing the mood and ethos of the earliest years of the modern Pentecostal revival.

The volume is strengthened by a useful index. The author has edited the manuscripts lightly to make them read more smoothly.

The documents Jacobsen has provided are a

clear reflection of the various strands of the revival. This authentic and useful set of readings will help pastors and earnest students of Pentecostalism to capture the broad outlines of Pentecostal belief.

— Reviewed by William W. Menzies, Ph.D., longtime
Assemblies of God educator and missions consultant,
Springfield, Missouri.

Beyond the First Visit: The Complete Guide To Connecting Guests To Your Church

GARY L. MCINTOSH (Baker, 186 pp., paperback)

Inviting guests to your church is easy. Getting them to stay is not. Gary McIntosh's new book offers concrete suggestions for getting guests to stay beyond the first visit.

According to McIntosh, we need to *guesterize* our churches. That is, we need "to make a church more responsive to its guests and better able to attract new ones." From the moment guests arrive at our campuses, they need to feel a welcome invitation to be there as well as opportunities to connect with others and get involved in the life of the church.

Each chapter of *Beyond the First Visit* includes numerous suggestions for making your church guest friendly, examples of what works and what doesn't, and discussion questions that can be used individually or among leadership groups.

If your church has many guests, but few who stay, read *Beyond the First Visit*. It will open your eyes to your guests' point of view.

— Reviewed by George P. Wood, pastor,
Living Faith Center, Santa Barbara, California.

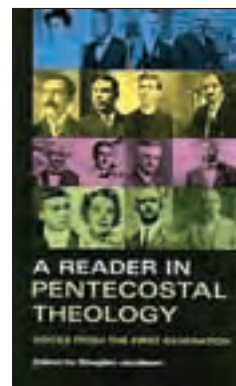
The Externally Focused Church

RICK RUSAW and ERIC SWANSON (Group Publishing, 224 pp., paperback)

The Externally Focused Church is a reminder of the needs in society that can be met by churches that are endeavoring to impact their world.

In a modern culture that distrusts institutions and disbelieves in absolutes, the church must move from telling the world about the compassion of Christ to showing the compassion of Christ. Rusaw and Swanson state, "People want more than offerings about faith, they want proof of faith."

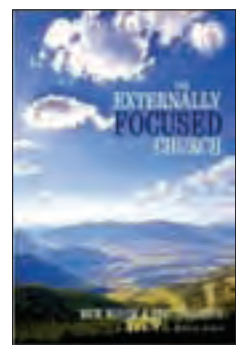
The Externally Focused Church postulates that it takes more than 20 examples of Christian



*A Reader in
Pentecostal Theology:
Voices From
the First Generation*



*Beyond the First Visit:
The Complete Guide To
Connecting Guests to Your Church*



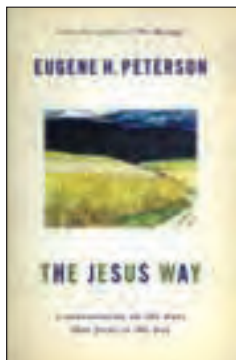
*The Externally Focused
Church*

service to convince a person that Christianity is more than just a dead faith. The church must meet and serve its community to convince people of the compassion of Christ. The world is open to being reached through acts of service.

Externally focused churches intentionally examine the needs in their communities. They choose needs in which they can partner with existing ministries and leverage the talents and resources of their church members to begin a positive impact on their society through acts of service.

The church needs to take action. Most organizations do not believe that the church cares about the community. But once the church has proven itself caring, the doors of evangelism open. People find themselves believing Christianity may have something real to offer after all.

— Reviewed by David Boyd, director, BGMC, The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri



*The Jesus Way:
A Conversation on the Ways
That Jesus Is the Way*



*Women, Ministry
and the Gospel*

The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways That Jesus Is the Way

EUGENE H. PETERSON (*Eerdmans, 289 pp., hardcover*)

Of the numerous Eugene Peterson books I have read, his latest, *The Jesus Way*, left me the most eager for a second read. This book is the third in a trilogy on spirituality, the first two being Peterson's best-selling *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places* and *Eat This Book*.

Peterson's presentation of Jesus as the "Way" focuses not so much on Jesus as the doorway to God, but on Jesus as the embodiment of a way of life completely foreign to the world's ways that surround and too readily shape us. In part 1, Peterson retells the stories of Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Isaiah of Jerusalem, and Isaiah of the Exile in terms of how they "prepare the way" for the Jesus way.

In part 2, he contrasts the ways of Jesus with those of Jesus' contemporaries — the *power* ways of Herod, Caiaphas, and Josephus and the *protest* ways of the Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots. Peterson's analysis is brilliant and historically fascinating.

The result is a scathing indictment on contemporary culture and its impact on contemporary spirituality. In Peterson's words, "The ways Jesus goes about loving and saving the world are personal. ... The ways employed in our

North American culture are conspicuously impersonal: programs, organizations, techniques, general guidelines, information detached from place." His conclusion says it all: "Jesus — most admired, most worshiped (kind of), most written about. And least followed."

— Reviewed by James Bradford, Ph.D., senior pastor, Central Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri.



Women, Ministry and the Gospel

MARK HUSBANDS and TIMOTHY LARSEN, eds. (*InterVarsity Press, 288 pp., paperback*)

Women, Ministry and the Gospel is a collection of essays presented at the 2005 Wheaton Theological Conference. The goal of the conference was to present new paradigms and fresh perspectives for evangelicals on the issue of women in public ministry. "They are offered as perspective and temperate contributions that can stimulate the thinking of readers.

"This outstanding collection of essays ... explores the current debate on women in ministry from biblical, theological, and ecclesiological perspectives. Bringing to bear ministerial and sociological insights on the issue, this impressive, integrative work aims to break through the current impasse between complementarians and egalitarians."

These are organized into five parts:

- Part 1: New Perspectives on the Biblical Evidence.
- Part 2: New Perspectives on the Body of Christ.
- Part 3: New Theological Perspectives on Identity and Ministry.
- Part 4: New Perspectives From the Humanities and Social Sciences.
- Part 5: Beyond the Impasse: Toward New Paradigms.

This book is an excellent resource for anyone considering the issue of women in ministry. Included in the 13 essays are a variety of philosophies, historical accounts, as well as differing interpretations of biblical texts. Reason and reconciliation are the tone of the writing, with the sense of invitation to come let us reason together.

— Reviewed by Sandi Bradford, pastor's wife and member of Women in Ministry Web site support team, Springfield, Missouri.

Christ in the Passover

CEIL and MOISHE ROSEN (*Moody, 166 pp., paperback*)

With their Jewish background and leadership in the Messianic Jewish movement, the Rosens bring knowledge and experience to this subject. This book is not technical, yet it contains helpful material for the ministry professional and the layperson.

Christ in the Passover begins with a good explanation of the election and purpose of ancient Israel, and an excellent contextualization of Israel in Egypt and the events leading up to the Exodus. The Rosens provide an excellent discussion on the parallels between the original events (Passover, Exodus, Wilderness Period, and the Inheritance of the Land of Promise) and the redemption and eternal life found in Jesus. It concludes with a well-written invitation to trust in Jesus. It also includes a how-to chapter for those looking for help in organizing their own Passover celebration.

The book has four appendices. The first offers a helpful, yet not exhaustive, chart of Jewish festivals and their original purposes. The second provides a *Haggadah*, the text followed when observing a Passover *Seder*. The third consists of a chart comparing the Passover practices of Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews living in North America. The final appendix surveys the main events of Passion Week.

Some problems associated with the volume include: stretched symbolism, tedious exegesis, and historical inaccuracies. Often the authors make reference to ancient Jewish practices not mentioned in the Bible, but fail to cite their sources. At other times, references are unclear or incomplete. Even more problematic is the authors' use of customs that originate long after the biblical period to interpret biblical passages.

Even with its weaknesses, this a useful, readable

volume filled with insight from a Jewish perspective from which non-Jewish believers will benefit. Therefore, the reader is challenged to focus on the evidence — an exercise that will increase his sensitivity to the less obvious messages of Scripture and his spiritual discernment.

— Reviewed by W.E. Nunnally, Ph.D., professor of Early Judaism and Christian Origins, Department of Theology, Evangel University, Springfield, Missouri.

Pastor Driven Stewardship: 10 Steps To Lead Your Church to Biblical Giving

ROD ROGERS (*Brown Books, 288 pp., paperback*)

Pastor Driven Stewardship presents a clear, straightforward case for the pastor becoming the primary encourager-leader to increase giving. Rogers claims that carefully following the 10 action steps in his book will increase giving by 10 to 60 percent in 5 weeks. While the 60-percent promise is probably a reach, a 10-percent increase is not. Rogers' primary recommendations are excellent, even if his writing style seems a bit brash at first. He gives pastors plenty of biblical perspectives and practical teaching outlines to consider.

The book is laid out in three major sections. Section 1 describes the main reasons why Christians do not give. Rogers describes the underlying causes for low giving and lays the problem squarely at the feet of both pastors and the pew. At the same time, he adds solutions and strategies for a plan that will overcome these problems.

Section 2 presents the heart of the book. Rogers describes his 10 steps for increasing giving with a variety of insights, outlines, sample letters, and illustrations. Nothing he writes will surprise you, but the clarity of his plan will help you develop your own approach.

Section 3 breaks each of the 10 steps into pieces. Rogers includes many pointed questions to help you discover how to grow your church (and maybe even yourself) in the grace of giving. Pick and choose what you can use, stay with your conclusions, and you will see excellent results.

— Reviewed by Gregg Hood, Ed.D., senior vice president, AG Financial Solutions, Springfield, Missouri.

NOTE:

Enrichment reviews books we feel our readers would like to know about. These books are not always in accord with our point of view, and the reviews do not constitute a recommendation of the books.



Christ in the Passover



*Pastor Driven Stewardship:
10 Steps To Lead Your Church
to Biblical Giving*

TPE.AG.ORG: Creating a Gateway to the World

What do Israel, Estonia, Venezuela, and Ukraine have in common? Along with 40 other nations, they are home to some of the latest readers of *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*. Thanks to the *Evangel's* Web presence, the magazine is accessible anytime anywhere the Internet is available.

During the *Evangel's* 94-year history, the print edition of the magazine has been read around the globe. But much of the international audience had to be content with a slimmer monthly edition of the magazine. Even today, only a small percentage of each press run ships outside the United States.

But **tpe.ag.org** knows no borders, time zones, or press-run constraints. And accessing the site is an increasingly interactive experience.

"Our new blog is offering fresh content daily as a supplement to the weekly selections we include from the print edition," says Editor Ken Horn. "The blog has had a relatively short life span, but is proving to be popular. We want to give our visitors the ability to leave comments and to access the feedback of other TPE online readers."

Audio interviews, photo essays, and author contacts round out TPEExtra, another recent addition to the *Evangel's* Web presence. And readers can sign up for a free e-mail devotional by clicking on the Daily Boost icon and leaving their address.

New subscribers can order the magazine online with complete security or contribute copies of the *Evangel* to the incarcerated thanks to Key Bearers' partnership with Light for the Lost.

If your church is unfamiliar with the new *Evangel*, it is easy to get reacquainted. **http://**

www.tpe.ag.org is just a click away.



The online Evangel knows no borders, time zones or press-run constraints.

2007 National Youth Scholarships Program Winners Announced

The Assemblies of God national Youth Ministries Department and Christian Higher Education Department have selected the recipients for the 2007 J. Robert Ashcroft National Youth Scholarship Program.

Applicants were judged in academics, extra-curricular involvement, Christian life, financial need, essay, and references.



Jones

First place and a \$5,000 scholarship was awarded to **John Jones**, son of John and Melanie Jones, of Louisville, Ky. John is attending North Central University in Minneapolis, Minn.



King

Second place and a \$3,000 scholarship went to **Ethan King**, son of David and Diane King, Jefferson City, Mo. Ethan is attending Central Bible College in Springfield, Mo.



Kurian

Third place and a \$1,000 scholarship was awarded to **Kevin Kurian**, son of Rajan and Sally Kurian, East Hanover, N.J. Kevin is attending Southeastern University in Lakeland, Fla.

The Christian Higher Education Department and national Youth Ministries Department annually sponsor the J. Robert Ashcroft National Youth Scholarship Program. Scholarships are awarded to high school seniors who attend Assemblies of God churches (or are dependents of Assemblies of God missionaries) and who plan to attend an Assemblies of God endorsed college after graduation. Applications can be obtained from district youth directors after November 2007 and can be submitted from January 1 to March 31, 2008, to district youth directors.

College Administrators and Educators Honored for Distinguished Service

The Commission on Christian Higher Education presented its Distinguished Administrator and Distinguished Educator Awards during its biennial luncheon held Thursday, August 9, 2007, at the Hyatt in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Carolyn J. Tennant, North Central University, Minneapolis, Minn.; James H. Railey, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Mo.; and the late Donald Baldwin, Vanguard University, Costa Mesa, Calif., received the Delta Alpha Distinguished Educator Award. Delmer Guynes, Southwestern Assemblies of God University, Waxahachie, Tex.; and Wayne Kraiss, Vanguard University, Costa Mesa, Calif., received the Omicron Alpha Distinguished Administrator Award.

In addition, several administrators and educators received recognition for their years of faithful service.



FIRE BIBLE Set To Ignite Student Passion for Missions



The **FIRE BIBLE: Student Edition**, the only in-depth student study Bible from a Pentecostal perspective, was released at the 2007 General Council. The 2-year project was a collaborative effort between Assemblies of God national Youth Ministries, LIFE Publishers, and the Assemblies of God Bible Alliance.

National Youth Director Jay Mooney says that the catalyst for the **FIRE BIBLE: Student Edition** project was two-fold:

1. An alarming percentage of biblical illiteracy in the church.

2. A deep conviction that a Pentecostal study Bible is a cornerstone answer to seizing the future of the church in fulfilling the Great Commission.

The **FBSE** will help students better understand the Christian faith and what it means to be a Spirit-filled disciple of Jesus Christ. This Bible is specially designed to help train students in five lifestyle habits; PRAY, LIVE, TELL, SERVE, and GIVE.

The **FIRE BIBLE: Student Edition** contains many features such as, an easy-to-use cross-reference section, a detailed overview of each book, over 80 key issue articles, and helpful charts, illustrations, and maps. It also contains thorough study notes, a commentary from a Pentecostal perspective, and has 20 major themes tracked throughout Scripture. The **FIRE BIBLE: Student Edition** (Item # 73TW1885) is available through Gospel Publishing House for \$29.95.

First E-LIFE Kid Missionary Commissioned

On May 6, 2007, at Park Crest Assembly in Springfield, Mo., fourth grader Sierra Alan became the first



E-LIFE Kid in the nation to be commissioned an E-LIFE Kid Missionary. An E-LIFE Kid

Missionary regularly invites school friends to church, reads the Bible and prays, and shows kindness and friendship to others.

Sierra's ambition is to live out her faith at her school campus, while also helping conduct a student-led after-school club that is sponsored by two teachers at her elementary school.

During the E-LIFE service at Park Crest AG, several children came forward to commit to be E-LIFE Kids.

Become a vital part of this national momentum. Challenge the children in your church to become E-LIFE Kids and to win their world for Jesus. For more information, visit <http://www.elife.ag.org>.

U.S. Missions Missionary Candidate Orientation

March 7–14, 2008, U.S. Missions will host candidate orientation for new missionary candidates. Spring



Candidate Orientation consists of interviewing, training, evaluating, and preparing candidates for the emotionally and

spiritually trying aspects of missions work. The week will end with a commissioning service on Friday, March 14.

The missionary application deadline for fall 2008 candidate orientation is June 6, 2008. The fall 2008 candidate orientation will be held on September 19–26, 2008.

For more information, contact Mary Hartley at 417-862-2781, ext. 3274.

Network 211: A Strategy To Reach the World

Network211 (21/1), a new and exciting eMinistry recently founded by George Flattery, uses the Internet to communicate the gospel. Unique in its strategy and use of technology, Network211 is a World Missions, cutting-edge eMinistry staffed by AGWM missionaries, missionary associates, and volunteers.



The Network211 coalition consists of churches, schools, ministries, and individuals working together to reach 10 million people in

the next decade. Its strategy includes four kinds of eMinistry: evangelizing, engaging, empowering, and equipping. By enlisting to work with any of these powerful ministries, you will become a member of the Network211 coalition. Visit <http://www.project10million.com>.

- **Evangelizing:** Your church or ministry can put Network211's evangelism content and response button on your Web site so those who visit and accept Christ can be referred to an approved volunteer for spiritual encouragement. Check out <http://www.journeyanswers.com>.

- **Engaging:** Network211 invites your church members to become 1-2-1 Connections volunteers. Volunteers become involved in missions as they interact with people worldwide concerning their spiritual lives. Visit <http://www.121Connects.com>.

- **Empowering:** Network211 invites you to use its *public* and *partner* content from its Source site. Public content is free. Partner content is available to coalition members who support Network211. These resources will empower your Web site for evangelistic outreach and follow up. Browse the content at <http://www.network211source.com>.

- **Equipping:** Network211 invites you to sign up for its online eMinistry Seminars. Network211 also presents some seminars onsite. See <http://www.network211eministry.com>.

For more information, e-mail: info@network211.com, or call 417-866-6767.

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Compassionate Evangelism



DesignPics



Spirit-anointed kindness is an incredibly powerful tool for bringing people to an awareness of the power of salvation.



Someone dropped it by my office — a spray. Tongue-in-cheek, the promo on the package read, “Believe in God instantly — miraculously pepperminty faith-enhancing breath spray.” Don’t you wish reaching people with the gospel was that easy?

God has called us to make disciples by sharing the life-changing message of Jesus Christ. But in our postmodern world, words alone will not gain us a hearing. More than ever the old adage is true: People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Those familiar with the gospel and the trappings of our worship are more likely to come and listen to our message. For people to respond, they need an anointed and clear presentation of God’s Word. To that end, I will never stop preaching the Bible or giving invitations.

But millions of people are not planning to attend church any time soon. They do not feel a need for the gospel’s power because they have not seen the gospel in action. Our postmodern world is pragmatic and only interested in what works. Yet, at its core, the postmodern still craves what people from every age have found irresistible — genuine compassion and kindness. We can sum up these two words as having a heart for people. We must translate that concern into action by helping to meet a need in their lives.

One of the marks of the Early Church — one

of the reasons it made such an impact on a pagan culture that hated Christians — was the fact they were compassionate and kind. They understood the power of kindness to touch people’s lives. Like us, they lived in a society that devalued life. People threw deformed boys into the city dump. People discarded unwanted girls in the trash. Christians rescued those little babies, fed them, and provided for them.

The Church’s passion for the poor and needy was so great they had seasons of fasting. Not only fasting and prayer for the poor, but they also saved the money they would have spent on those meals and gave it to the poor and needy. In a culture that did not care for the poor and needy, Christians walked the streets and reached out to care for them.

Early Church historians tell us that when two devastating epidemics swept through the Roman Empire (165 A.D. and 251 A.D.), one-third of the people died. People fled the cities for fear the plague might overtake them. During those epidemics, Christians stayed in the towns and cities to minister to people. Many times, they caught the plague themselves. As they ministered to those who were dying, it made a huge impact. Over time an entire culture was changed because of the Christians’ compassionate and kind response to those around them.

In a real sense, Paul’s command for the Colossians to put on compassion and kindness (Colossians 3:12) is a call to pre-evangelism in which the church opens people’s hearts to the gospel by meeting needs in their lives. Spirit-anointed kindness is an incredibly powerful tool for bringing people to an awareness of the power of salvation. It is how God reached out to us. The apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 2:4 that God’s kindness leads us to repentance.

At times, it seems we have made evangelism too difficult. Too many Christians are ineffective evangelists because they carry the unnecessary burden of feeling the need to be articulate or of having an answer for every question. Over time, I have become increasingly convinced that a passion for God coupled with a compassionate kindness toward people will shine a light so bright that those in darkness will be able to see their way home. ☪