

# GROWING A CHURCH

SEVEN  
APOSTOLIC  
PRINCIPLES

DAVID K. BERNARD

# Growing a Church

by David K. Bernard

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To  
my daughter, Lindsey Renee.

She and New Life Church  
were both born in the spring of 1992.

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## FOREWORD

Shelves in bookstores all over our country are lined with books focusing on church growth and revival, with new volumes appearing almost daily. The tremendous interest in this subject encourages further writings, and with churches across North America experiencing the revival prophesied in the Book of Joel, it is inevitable that the current popularity of books detailing church growth efforts will continue to expand.

Our ministers and church leaders constantly search for inspired direction and practical, Bible- based methods in the area of church growth. This is precisely why we need this book by Brother David Bernard. Almost all of the current writings on this subject reflect the trinitarian perspective of their authors, but the foundation of Brother Bernard's new book is the oneness of God. Brother Bernard's knowledge of and devotion to this truth allow the readers to share his special insight into the Word and to feel the anointing of the Holy Spirit as he applies the principles of the Word to church growth.

Having been born into a pioneering preacher's home and being involved in revival both directly and indirectly all of my life, I want to thank Brother Bernard for the biblical tenets of church growth he demonstrates in his own ministry—and for his willingness to share them with us. What you read in the pages of this book will equip you to reach dimensions of revival and church growth so necessary if we are to fulfill the great commission in these last days.

James L. Kilgore

## **PREFACE**

I offer this book with a sense of burden and fulfillment but also with some hesitation.

The hesitation arises because I do not wish to seem—or to be—presumptuous, boastful, or egotistical, nor do I wish to claim to be an expert on church growth. I simply wrote this book because I have had the privilege of a variety of beneficial experiences coupled with an opportunity to share my conclusions in writing. While I have had the idea to write this book for a long time, my original plan was to wait another five or ten years to build a further track record in this area. However, in recent years, I have been asked to teach on this subject in conferences and schools in North America and overseas. Moreover, ministerial friends as well as the publisher have encouraged me to go ahead and put my ideas in print now. These urgings, combined with my own burden to contribute whatever I can through the writing ministry, have motivated this book.

I am striving to fulfill a word that the Lord gave me in 1980. After six years of college, I moved to Beaumont, Texas, for the summer to work as a law clerk, with the goal of becoming a lawyer after one more year of law school. Without planning on my part, I found myself invited by several local churches to teach midweek Bible studies, to speak to youth groups, and then to preach in regular services. I would perform my legal duties during the day and then rush home to prepare for church activities at night. Although I considered myself, and introduced myself, as a law student rather than a preacher, I ended up preaching or teaching twenty-one times in eleven weeks.

My last night in Beaumont, as I prepared to return to Austin for my final year at the University of Texas School of Law, I sought the Lord for direction. He drew my attention to Colossians 4:17: “Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it” (KJV). I realized that God had given me a ministry that I had not planned for or sought but that I needed to accept. That night I decided that, while it would only be good stewardship of my time and money to finish law school, upon graduation I would somehow enter the ministry full time. From that day till now, I have felt compelled to use whatever abilities and insights God has given me in an attempt to advance His kingdom. This book is one fulfillment of that burden.

Readers may well ask what credibility I might have to write on the subject of church growth. At the risk of seeming presumptuous, I believe that I should share my background

so that readers can evaluate my views in light of it, with whatever strengths and weaknesses they may perceive.

I am extremely blessed to have a rich Apostolic Pentecostal heritage and an unusual diversity of experiences that have helped give perspective to this subject. Beginning in 1965, my parents served as pioneer missionaries to Korea for over twenty years, and they established churches in Louisiana before and after their foreign service. They personally founded six churches, and workers under them planted twenty- three others. I grew up in home and foreign missions amid revival, miracles, and church growth.

Upon my return from Korea to the United States at age seventeen to attend college, I became part of a large, multicultural church in the heart of Houston and later a small church in Austin. I began full-time Christian ministry in 1981, first being associated with a Bible college and a large church in Jackson, Mississippi, and next with the world headquarters of the United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI) and a medium-sized church in suburban St. Louis.

I have also ministered across North America and around the world in a variety of settings, from small churches in homes and storefronts to churches of over a thousand. As of 2001, I have had the opportunity of visiting sixty-four countries, taking forty-three short-term missions trips, and ministering in thirty-six countries on six continents. I have visited all fifty states of the Union, preaching and teaching in forty-two. In total, I have ministered in approximately 250 churches or cities in the United States and 100 in other countries, including various conferences, retreats, seminars, and camp meetings.

Over the years, I observed principles of church growth at work in many settings and cultures. I also saw methods of operation that were counterproductive. Eventually, I felt the call of God to put into practice the things I had observed, analyzed, and learned. Consequently, in 1992, my wife and I founded a church in Austin, beginning in our home. After one month we moved to a rented church building owned by another group—they held a Sunday morning service while we held an afternoon service. In 1996, we were able to build our own sanctuary to seat three hundred, and in 2000 we added a new sanctuary to seat eight hundred. We also have four daughter works (one conducting services in Spanish, two in nearby towns, and one in a predominantly black neighborhood), three other Bible studies or prayer meetings in nearby communities, and four outreach services (in two jails, one nursing home, one retirement home). Many

faithful people have contributed significantly to the growth of all these endeavors, and of course God is the one who has given the increase. In 1995, I began serving as presbyter of Section

12 of the Texas District UPCI. This section comprises thirty-five counties; includes Austin, San Antonio, and the Hill Country; and stretches to Del Rio and Eagle Pass on the Mexican border. The total land area is almost forty thousand square miles (larger than the state of Indiana), and the total population is over three million. From 1995 to 2001, the number of churches grew from thirty to fifty-one (including six daughter works). My close association with these churches—large and small, old and new—has also provided insights for church growth.

At this point, many readers will want to know what kind of church growth we have experienced in Austin. Statistics cannot tell the whole story, and statistics can be misleading. Nevertheless, for a book of this kind, this is a fair question. Thus, despite some hesitation lest I seem to glorify self, and yet with the example of statistics in the Book of Acts in mind, I will offer several measurements for readers to evaluate as they wish.

As of the spring of 2001, people in regular church attendance numbered about 600 plus another 200 in outreach services. For comparison with mainline denominations, total constituency—which includes irregular attendees and others who identify with the church—was almost 1,000. In 2000, we saw 127 people baptized with the Holy Spirit in the local church (including church-sponsored trips and rallies) and another 73 in jail services, for a total of 200. In the first half of 2001, about 15 people per month were receiving the Holy Ghost in the church.

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These statistics clearly reveal that I am not the pastor of a megachurch, yet they also indicate that the growth that are relevant to the overwhelming majority of churches. The church is not so large that its operation would seem irrelevant or foreign to the average pastor, yet it has grown large enough to have experienced the typical challenges, opportunities, and adjustments that accompany significant growth. Moreover, I have been able to identify some principles that proved effective throughout the process.

Over the years I have attended some church growth seminars and have read books on church organization, management, and growth. I also have a bachelor's degree in



managerial studies from Rice University. While these sources have no doubt influenced my thinking, I chose not to make this book a research project. Rather, I sought to integrate my observations, experiences, studies, and analysis over a period of years; distill them into a few basic principles; personally apply these principles in a practical way to the planting and growing of a church; keep records of the results; and then report on the principles and methods that worked.

Obviously, my ideas are not entirely original, as I have received input in many ways. Nevertheless, I have sought to write a book from a fresh perspective with my primary sources being (1) *the principles of Scripture*, (2) *personal observations* (positive and negative) in the Apostolic Pentecostal movement, and (3) *personal experiences* in founding a church. As much as possible, I have tried to describe what has actually worked instead of what might theoretically work. Of course, I do not pretend that I have exhausted the subject of church growth or that my ideas are the last word. Each reader will need to evaluate my concepts, adapt them, and apply them to his or her own unique situation. Each church, city, region, and country is different, so not everything may be applicable or relevant to other churches, at least not in the same way.

My prayer is that this book will provide inspiration, encouragement, and insight to pastors and other church workers around the world.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **An Apostolic Church**

*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. . . . And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:42, 47).*

### **APOSTOLIC GROWTH**

**J**esus Christ established the New Testament church by the apostles He had chosen. When He commissioned them to preach the gospel, He told them, "He who receives you receives Me." (See Matthew 10:1-7, 40.) Shortly before His crucifixion, He prayed for the apostles and then said, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word" (John 17:20). The church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20).

Clearly, then, for a local congregation to be part of the church of Jesus Christ and for it to have true spiritual growth, it must adhere to the message and experience of the apostles. Only then can we say that it "grows with the increase that is from God" (Colossians 2:19). Thus, before we implement a church growth strategy, we must establish that our objective is to build an apostolic church.

In Acts 2, we find the following essential characteristics of the New Testament church, which we need today if we are to be apostolic:

- *Apostolic experience*: "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. . . . Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (verses 4, 41).
- *Apostolic doctrine*: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (verse 42). The apostolic message included the true humanity of Jesus Christ (verses 22, 30); the true deity of Jesus Christ (verse 36); the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our salvation (verses 22-36); the personal response

to the gospel by repentance, water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit (verses 37-39); and the life of holiness (verse 40).

- *Apostolic unity and fellowship*: “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. . . . And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread. . . . Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart” (verses 1, 42, 44-46). The pooling of all resources was a temporary practice by the thousands of new believers from many towns and countries who had traveled to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost and remained there after receiving the Holy Spirit, probably in anticipation of the soon return of Jesus. As time went on, the believers scattered, established congregations in many locations, and instituted a different financial system (I Corinthians 9:3-14; 16:2). Nevertheless, the principle remained the same - giving generously with one accord as God enables, to meet the needs of the body (II Corinthians 8-9).
- *Apostolic prayer and praise*: “And they continued steadfastly . . . in prayers. . . . So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people” (verses 42, 46-47).
- *Apostolic miracles*: “Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles” (verse 43).

The result was consistent church growth: “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). If we will follow these principles, we can expect the same results. If we fail to implement these principles, we may still have some results, perhaps even spectacular results, but we will not have authentic church growth. Our goal must be to see both *quantitative growth*—souls saved according to the apostolic pattern—and *qualitative growth*—individual and corporate development according to the apostolic pattern.

## LEARNING FROM OTHERS

Since our goal is apostolic growth, we are limited as to how much we can rely upon the growth strategies of those who are not apostolic. We can learn some helpful leadership and management principles from secular sources, and we can glean ideas from various churches. We must recognize, however, that our goals are not always the same as those of other groups. Therefore, we must carefully evaluate growth principles and methods that we obtain from nonapostolic sources and modify or discard those that do not advance apostolic goals. In the final analysis, our primary instruction in church growth must come from the Bible, from contemporary apostolic role models that have proven productive over the years, and from our own spiritual calling, anointing, and communion with God.

For example, we may hear an impressive story of a church that grew to one thousand members in two years. Before uncritically adopting the methods of that church, however, we need to evaluate its results by our goals. How many people actually attend services weekly? Did most of the growth occur by transfer of membership from other churches? By the receiving church's own standard, were those people already saved? If so, what was the advantage to the kingdom of God? Did the receiving pastor first seek to reconcile all incoming members to their previous churches? Did he or she contact the former pastors to obtain pertinent information, insight, and recommendations? If not, in many cases the transfers will actually hinder true spiritual growth. Does the church call for biblical commitments and uphold biblical standards for leadership, or does it encourage involvement without true repentance and holiness? If so, it may give people good feelings but inhibit them from making the changes that God desires.

Even other Spirit-filled churches may not always have the same goals as we do, and so their methods may not be entirely suitable for us. For instance, in a typical trinitarian Pentecostal church today, approximately thirty percent of the adults in regular attendance have been baptized with the Holy Spirit, while in a typical Oneness Pentecostal church the number is probably ninety percent or more. If the goal is to see people receive the Holy Spirit and live a Spirit-filled life, then a typical Oneness church of three hundred members may be achieving as much toward that goal as a trinitarian church of nine hundred. If so, the church of three hundred will not advance further toward its goals by modeling itself after the seemingly more successful church of nine hundred.

Likewise, how should we measure the success of a media ministry, a crusade, an attendance drive, a youth program, or even a Sunday morning sermon? If the goal is simply to record mental decisions for Christ, then we will use certain methods to maximize the number of people who make verbal or written commitments. If the goal is to lead people to repentance, water baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and a new life of holiness, then we must use significantly different methods.

It is also a mistake to focus on nonbiblical strategies in an attempt to find the key to church growth. While it may be tempting to look for a new method or even a new doctrine as the key to instant revival or dramatic growth, if we want to be truly apostolic we must seek to grow by the principles of the first-century church. Methods may vary depending upon culture, location, time period, and other factors, but biblical principles remain the same.

If we truly believe that the Bible is our final authority, we will look supremely to the Bible for principles of church growth. The apostle Paul, probably the greatest missionary, church planter, and church growth consultant of all time, stated, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Timothy 3:16-17).

If a principle or a method is vital to church growth, then we will find it in the record of the New Testament church. If a principle or a method is not in the New Testament, then it cannot be essential. If we think we have found a key to church growth but cannot find where the apostles explicitly taught or practiced it, then we must not place major emphasis on it. It may be a useful method, but it may also be an erroneous concept. In any case, it cannot be the primary answer that we seek.

Finally, we must be cautious in comparing ourselves even to other apostolic churches and ministries. While we can learn from one another, each minister’s personality, background, preparation, and talents are different. Likewise, the circumstances of each community and each local congregation are different. While we can identify successful principles at work in other ministries, we will need to apply them in a unique way to our own situation. It is likely that we will have to adapt successful methods to make them suitable for our own use. We must be flexible and willing to experiment within biblical parameters. Since each situation is unique, we should not com-

pare our church to others with regard to the timing, manner, and quantity of growth. Other churches and ministries may well serve as inspirational examples for us, but ultimately we cannot judge ourselves by them, whether favorably or unfavorably. Instead, we must evaluate ourselves according to the opportunities, talents, and calling that God has given to us. “For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise” (II Corinthians 10:12). No matter what level of success we seemingly have attained, we should keep building up the church body “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). Of course, this process will not be complete until the Lord returns for His church.

In discussing principles of growth, this book often describes what we have done in Austin, Texas. I offer these experiences and methods simply as practical illustrations, not necessarily as ideals, for even in the Austin church we continually seek to adapt, improve, and change with changing circumstances. Thus, the reader should evaluate our ideas and methods in light of his or her gifts, calling, and circumstances.

## **CALLING AND DIRECTION FROM GOD**

Spiritual leadership is the key to church growth. Of course, direction and power of God are essential from start to finish, for God’s work is not accomplished by human ability but by the Spirit of God (Zechariah 4:6). In addition, God has chosen humans to build His church. In the Book of Acts, the apostles and elders (local pastors) provided the leadership for church growth.

In order for spiritual leaders to be effective, they must have the call of God upon their lives. First, they must have a divine call to the ministry that they seek to fulfill. Second, they must have a confirmation in the specific field of their labor.

It is true that Christians can and should be effective witnesses of Jesus Christ wherever they go. Thus, ministers should be able to work for God in whatever circumstances they find themselves. However, to see significant long-term results, ministers need to receive clear direction from God as to location and timing. Paul is a good example. At the beginning of his Christian life, Paul received a call of God for ministry (Acts 9:15-16; 22:14-15). After years of preparation and service, he received a missionary

call (Acts 13:1-2). As a missionary and church planter, he received direction from God regarding where to go and where not to go at certain times.

Acts 16:6-10 reveals some instances in Paul's ministry: "Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them." Later, God did lead Paul to minister in Asia Minor (Acts 19:10), and churches were also established in Bithynia (I Peter 1:1). While God wanted the gospel to spread throughout the world, He had specific plans as to timing, location, and personnel.

As another example, when Paul ministered in Corinth, he made some converts but also faced significant opposition. God confirmed that he was at the right time and place and that God wanted him to build a church there. "Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city'" (Acts 18:9-10).

Because of this type of direction from God, Paul ministered with assurance. Confident of God's will, he was able to seize opportunities, overcome obstacles, and endure opposition. We need the same kind of direction and assurance today to establish and grow apostolic churches. In times of opposition, setbacks, and discouragement, God's calling and confirmation will sustain us until victory comes.

In 1981, I graduated from law school but, having heard the call of God (as described in the preface), I entered full-time ministry instead of pursuing a legal career. As newlyweds, my wife and I moved from Austin, Texas, to Jackson, Mississippi, to pursue our ministry. When we left town, I told her I felt impressed that someday we would come back to Austin to work for the Lord. Over the years, we carried a burden for the city, and I was approached on four occasions about ministerial positions there: to start a daughter work, to be assistant pastor, and to be pastor of two different churches. In 1986 we seriously contemplated starting a church there, consulting with family, friends, spiritual leaders, the sectional presbyter, and the district superintendent. All human signs were encouraging, yet we did not feel positive direction from the Lord, so we did not go.

In 1991, our burden intensified. Once again, we began praying, seeking counsel, and gathering necessary information. As my wife and I prayed together on December 31, the Spirit of God came upon us. I asked God to fulfill Romans 8:26 in our lives: “For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” Immediately, I felt as if a heavy weight pressed down upon my chest, almost as if I were drowning, and I began to sob and to speak forcefully in tongues. We knew God had answered our prayer and would soon give us direction. Two days later, on January 2, 1992, in prayer my wife and I both felt a strong sense of victory and a confirmation that we were to make plans immediately to begin a new church in Austin. After approval by the district board, we went.

In retrospect, the timing could not have been better. Unknown to us, about the same time we moved to Austin several families also moved there who were to become building blocks of our new church, including a family who had received the Holy Spirit in the charismatic movement and one who was holding prayer meetings in their home. In the late 1980s, Austin suffered a severe economic decline, but in the early 1990s it began an unprecedented boom. We were able to buy a home and land for a church just before real estate prices skyrocketed. In two years, our land was worth almost double the purchase price. Humanly speaking, we could not have anticipated, planned, or orchestrated these and many other events to bring our church to its present level of growth and revival, but God gave us supernatural direction at the right time.

The calling and direction that we need from God come through prayer, which is the first of seven principles of apostolic church growth.



# CHAPTER ONE

## PRAYER

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*Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men (I Timothy 2:1).*

*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints; and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6:18-19).*

### APOSTOLIC PRAYER

**T**he apostolic church was born in prayer. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell upon 120 disciples as they waited in united prayer for ten days (Acts 1:14; 2:1). The early church maintained the habit of prayer (Acts 2:42). The first miraculous healing of the New Testament church occurred when Peter and John went to the Temple for their daily time of prayer (Acts 3:1). When the believers faced opposition and persecution, their response was to pray for boldness to witness and to see miracles take place by the power of God (Acts 4:24-31). The result of the prayer, witnessing, and miracles was spectacular church growth (Acts 4:4; 5:14).

Since God is the one who causes the church to grow, we can only expect genuine growth as we maintain a daily relationship with Him and depend upon His power to accomplish the task. The chief means of doing so is prayer. For this reason, prayer should be the first item on our agenda—"first of all" we should pray in every situation (I Timothy 2:1). We should maintain a constant attitude of prayer and a daily habit of prayer. We should be "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18). "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2). "Pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:17).

We must pray specifically for (1) the *opportunity* and (2) the *ability* to proclaim the

gospel effectively. Paul requested, “[Pray] for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:19). “[Pray] for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ” (Colossians 4:3). Clearly, prayer is essential for effective ministry and church growth.

## **PURPOSE OF PRAYER**

As discussed in the preface and the introduction, through prayer we receive the divine call for Christian service as well as divine direction. Furthermore, through prayer we receive the desire and power to do God’s will.

Prayer is not a mechanical process whereby we earn favors from God. Rather, it is the means of communing with God and maintaining our relationship with Him. We do not purchase power from God by so many hours of prayer and so many days of fasting. Rather, prayer and fasting are the means by which we conform our minds and bodies to God’s will.

In prayer, we submit to God and make His priorities our priorities. Jesus taught us to pray, “Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:9-10). Prayer does not convince a reluctant God to act on our behalf, but it gives God permission to work in our lives as He already desires. Since He has given us freedom of choice, He does not force His will on us, nor can we assume that He will automatically act on our behalf in the absence of our invitation.

Prayer does not<sup>18</sup> change God’s attitude, but it changes our attitude so that we are ready to receive what God has planned for us. Prayer molds and transforms us so that we are prepared to receive the answers that God wants to give us. Prayer also emphasizes to God and to ourselves our true needs, desires, and priorities. Prayer extends the work of God into the lives of family, friends, and others in need. Finally, prayer draws attention to the work of God, reminding us that we are dependent upon Him and that He deserves the glory for answered prayer.

In short, prayer enables us (1) *to discern God’s will* and (2) *to do God’s will*. Through prayer we receive the ability—including desire, understanding, strength,

encouragement, and determination—to live for God and work for God. When we pray in faith according to God’s will, we have confidence that He will hear and answer us. (See Matthew 21:21-22; I John 5:14-15.)

Since prayer is not a mechanical process, some- times we may pray for hours with seemingly few results. Despite an hour of prayer, a preacher may deliver a mediocre sermon, especially if he has neglected to study. On the other hand, his normal prayer time may be stolen from him by unexpected developments, forcing him to go to the pulpit with only a few moments of communication with God, and yet he may minister under a powerful anointing. The reason is that God is gracious and He supplies what is lacking. We can preach from the overflow of the Spirit, drawing from hidden reservoirs created by a consistent, long-term relationship with God. If we frequently skimp on our prayer time, however, we find that the reservoirs run dry.

When the disciples could not cast the demon out of a possessed person, they asked Jesus why not. He explained, “Because of your unbelief. . . . However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fast- ing” (Matthew 17:20-21). The point is not that there are special demons whose expulsion requires an extraordinary amount of prayer and fasting as some form of payment. Rather, a spiritual work requires faith, and a great spiritual challenge must be met with great faith. The strength of our faith is related to the strength of our relationship with God. We can- not simply conjure up such a relationship on the spur of the moment, when we suddenly face a great need. Instead, we must build a strong relationship with God by consistent communion with Him through prayer and fasting.

## **PERSONAL PRAYER**

Each person, and especially each minister, needs to schedule prayer when he can devote both quality and quantity of time. As the early church grew, the apostles had to restructure their organization and adjust their workload to make prayer and study their priority. They said, “We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). The morning is a good time for me to pray, before I face the distractions, interruptions, and busyness of the day. On a typical weekday (Tuesday through Friday), my goal is to arise at 7:00 Am, arrive at the church by 8:00 Am, and close my office door until 9:00 Am. This gives me an hour of uninterrupted time for prayer, meditation, Bible reading, and Bible study. I do not use this time for sermon preparation, although sermon ideas may come to me. Rather, my goal is personal spiritual renewal and growth through prayer and the Word.

This schedule is sometimes altered by travel, surgeries, and other urgent situations, but if I can keep it at least seventy-five percent of the time (three out of four days), then I count it a success. On Saturday, Sunday, and Monday my schedule is different. Saturday is usually full with special activities and preparation for Sunday, and for me the evening is the best time to pray and study. On Sunday, I pray and study before the morning and evening services. On Monday, my day off, I have devotions with my wife and children in the evening.

Other opportunities for prayer arise each day, such as when visiting people, during counseling, and before and after worship services. We can cultivate an attitude of prayer so that we maintain a constant communication with God throughout the events of the day. Sometimes I pray and meditate while showering or driving, although these times obviously do not allow for total concentration. When I receive a telephone call about a sickness or other urgent need, I typically offer to pray over the phone, and many times the caller receives an immediate touch from God. When counseling people about an important matter, I usually pray with them before and after our discussion, not merely as a ritual but to ask for God's immediate help. This time of prayer reminds us that we must look to God for answers, helps set the proper tone for the discussion, begins to implement the course of action that we decide upon, and provides an opportunity for miraculous intervention.

Many times, prayer is the means of receiving the necessary wisdom from God to address a problem. I frequently rely on the promise of James 1:5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." When I face a pastoral problem, I try not to act hastily; if I do not see an immediate answer, I will delay a final decision until I have prayed about the situation for several days. Try to remember the admonition of James 1:19-20: "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."

Taking time to pray is particularly advisable when someone has a wrong attitude or is heading in a wrong direction. Over and over again, I have seen an answer come supernaturally after several days or weeks of prayer. In many cases, God deals with the person's heart so that he or she corrects the problem without the need for direct pastoral intervention.

Of course, we should not use prayer as an excuse to avoid taking a necessary stand or to avoid confronting a difficult situation. Even when such action is required, however, prayer can help us to know what steps to take, how to take them, and when to take them. Prayer helps to purify our motives and emotions so that when we do address a problem we will do it with “the wisdom that is from above,” which is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17).

The growth of our church has placed increasing demands on my time. It is a constant challenge to be faithful in prayer and study. Periodically, I must evaluate and adjust my activities so as to maintain the priority and habit of prayer. At such times, I have found it helpful to record the amount of daily prayer and Bible reading, not as legalism but simply for accurate information and self-examination.

In my early ministry, I often struggled to find time to pray more than fifteen minutes, until one year I made a commitment to pray an average of one hour per day for five days per week. I logged my prayer time on a calendar to ensure that I would keep my commitment. Of course, we should not emphasize quantity over quality, and we should not evaluate ourselves or others primarily by minutes or hours spent in prayer. Some people can seemingly spend much time in prayer without attaining maturity of life or ministry; we must seek a balance in this area as in all other aspects of spiritual life. Nevertheless, that year of disciplined prayer helped me to reach a new level of prayer, both in quantity and quality.

I also receive great strength from the prayers of others. Sometimes, my prayer time is less than ideal due to tight schedules, physical and mental exhaustion, events out of my control, or simple neglect. Nevertheless, God has been very gracious to give blessings, strength, renewal, and revival to me personally and to our church. I am convinced that this continuing work of God is due in large part to the faithful prayers of my wife, my parents, my mother-in-law, and the saints who uphold me daily in prayer. As the challenges and opportunities grow, the need for prayer grows, and seasoned prayer warriors are an important key to continued growth.

### **CORPORATE PRAYER**

Since prayer is essential for church growth, we must make prayer a priority in the

life of the church. The pastor must consistently emphasize prayer, structure prayer into the regular schedule of the church, and personally be an example in this area.

For the first four years of our church, we held services on Sunday afternoon and Tuesday evening, as we shared a building that was occupied at other times. I was accustomed to attending three services a week, and the span from Tuesday to Sunday seemed far too long. Therefore, my wife and I conducted a prayer meeting in our home on Thursday night. While we did not stress it as a regular service, we encouraged everyone to attend when they could. Soon we had a faithful core of regular attendees, and as the church grew, many more attended on occasion. Sometimes we would have as many as thirty people. We began at 7:30, sang and took prayer requests for ten or fifteen minutes, and then prayed until about 8:30. At the end, we usually gathered around those who had special needs to focus prayer on them, and then we praised God together for victory. Afterwards, most people stayed until 9:00 or 9:30 for fellowship and refreshments.

This weekly prayer meeting proved to be one of the most important factors in establishing our church. It helped us to develop a consistent prayer life as a body and drew us into close fellowship. Many people won victories and many lives were transformed in those prayer meetings. New people learned how to pray, intercede for others, and yield to the gifts of the Spirit.

These prayer meetings also set the stage for great moves of God on Sunday. Time after time, we would present requests to God on Thursday and see them answered by the weekend. People whom we prayed for on Thursday would come to church on Sunday and repent, receive the Holy Ghost, or receive healing. It was a vivid, unforgettable lesson on faith and <sup>22</sup>on the power of prayer.

We followed this schedule for four years, until we moved into our own building. We now hold three services a week, and we have prayer before and after each service. While our schedule changed, we did not want to lose the emphasis on prayer. Here are ways that we currently promote prayer in our assembly:

- *We schedule prayer thirty minutes before each worship service* and encourage everyone to attend. Prayer rooms for men and women are available for this purpose. The youth have their own prayer meeting before the Sunday night service.

- *Every service ends with an opportunity for prayer.* Every Sunday morning and evening message ends with a strong appeal for immediate prayer.
- Before each service, a team of men called the *pastor's prayer partners* meets to pray for me. A few minutes before dismissal, they gather around me for focused prayer. We have four teams with leaders; each of them takes a week.
- For urgent prayer needs, we have a *prayer line* answered by two people, one from 7:00 Am till noon, and one from noon till 9:00 Pm.

They are retired ladies who are usually at home and who have an answering machine. Someone with an urgent need can call either the prayer line or the church office. The prayer line operator then calls the *prayer team* leaders. Each leader in turn calls a list of volunteers who have pledged to take time to pray whenever they receive a call. Thus, within a short time, a number of people can be mobilized to pray for a special need. Many times, we have called the prayer line because of an accident, sudden illness, or other crisis, and soon the person in need received healing or deliverance.

- My wife and other leaders conduct *ladies prayer on Tuesday morning*. On alternate weeks they also have Bible study.
- We hold a *prayer meeting on Thursday night*, with a different leader and a specific prayer focus each week. Here is a typical schedule for four weeks: (1) Daughters of Zion (mothers praying for children). (2) A designated care group. (See chapter 6.) (3) Outreach team. (4) Single adults. Regardless of these designations, everyone is invited every week, and everyone is encouraged to attend at least once a month.
- In addition to the foregoing, *the church departments are encouraged to schedule regular prayer times*. For instance, the Sunday school staff meets every Sunday morning from 9:15 to 9:30 for prayer and announcements, with classes beginning at 10:00. Any meeting on Sunday afternoon, including choir practice, ends at 6:00 so that the participants can pray before the evening service starts at 6:30. Youth activities are scheduled for Friday night, and once a month they hold a prayer meeting or a prayer journey. Periodically, the men schedule a Saturday prayer breakfast

or a prayer night, as do the women.

- During the week, *the church is typically open for individual prayer* from 9:00 Am to 5:00 Pm (office hours) and 7:00 to 10:00 Pm (various group activities). Keys are provided for people who wish to pray at church early in the morning or late at night.
- On occasion, we schedule a twenty-four-hour *prayer chain*, in which people sign up for one or two hours each; an *all-night prayer meeting*; or a *week of prayer and fasting*, in which people volunteer for certain days. These events help people to press beyond the routine and help unite the church in prayer.
- A *prayer coordinator* regularly publicizes these various opportunities for prayer and communicates with the *World Network of Prayer*. Local prayer requests and victory reports are announced in the weekly bulletin. Requests, reports, and instructions from the World Network of Prayer and from home and foreign missionaries are posted on bulletin boards in the fellowship hall. To encourage focused prayer for missions, in each prayer room are pictures of our Partners in Missions along with flags of various countries and a world missions map.

Prayer is a spiritual endeavor that we cannot reduce to a ritual or a program but that requires intention and structure. For us to be prayerful and our church to be prayerful, we must plan to pray. And planning is our second principle of church growth.



## CHAPTER TWO

### PLANNING

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*For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it? (Luke 14:28).*

**B** using the illustration of building a tower, Jesus taught us the importance of careful consideration, planning, and commitment. If we expect our church to grow, we must commit ourselves to growth, and such a commitment requires planning.

Jesus carefully planned for His church and prepared His disciples to lead the church according to His plan. As a man, He first prayed to obtain divine direction and then made plans accordingly. Before He chose His twelve apostles, He spent all night in prayer (Luke 6:12-13). He then took three years to train them, both by instruction and by hands-on ministerial experience.

When the church began, the believers initially remained in Jerusalem, but it was God's plan for the gospel to spread from Jerusalem to all Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). As the church grew, the apostles saw the need for organization and coordination of efforts. They developed structure as needed, such as when they appointed seven deacons to assist them in administrative matters (Acts 6). Through investigations, reports, recommendations, appointments, meetings, and conferences, they facilitated church growth throughout their world. (See, for example, Acts 8:14; 11:1-4, 22-26; 13:1-3; 15:1-35; 21:17-26.)

The apostle Paul planned strategically for revival. Wherever he went, he established churches in key cities, and these churches in turn reached entire regions. He spent two years teaching in Ephesus, the capital of the Roman province of Asia (western Asia Minor, in modern Turkey), and in so doing he was able to evangelize the whole province (Acts 19:9-10). To the Roman church he explained his overall strategy for ministry and then listed some concrete plans that he hoped to fulfill (Romans 15:19-25). To the Ephesian elders he explained his philosophy of ministry (Acts 20:16-38), and he

did likewise to the Thessalonian church (I Thessalonians 2).

## VISION

In order to grow, a church must have a clear vision of what it is supposed to become. The Holy Spirit inspires and imparts that vision to a God-called, anointed leader who then articulates and shares that vision with the body of believers. As he casts the vision, they embrace it and make it their own. A local church will only realize its spiritual potential when both pastor and congregation share a vision and unite around it.

Before the New Testament church began, Jesus imparted His vision of the church to His disciples and trained them for ministry and leadership. He specifically gave to Peter the keys of the kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19). On the Day of Pentecost, the birthday of the New Testament church, Peter, with the support of the other apostles, opened the door of the church by proclaiming the apostolic message of salvation.

The congregation embraced and supported this vision completely, even to the extent of giving their possessions to the apostles to use as needed for the common good. “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship” (Acts 2:42). “Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need” (Acts 4:32-35).

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Time and time again, we see that the leader is the link between the divine impartation of a vision and the congregational fulfillment of that vision. The Samaritan revival began with the evangelistic burden of Philip. The Gentiles first received the gospel because Peter received clear direction from God and acted upon it. Paul was personally obedient to his heavenly vision, and many churches were established as a result, including the first churches in Europe.

The leader must find a way to share the vision with other leaders and get them to embrace it. Peter needed the support of the other apostles on the Day of Pentecost. Philip

needed Peter and John to confirm his efforts in Samaria. Peter had to convince the entire leadership of the church that it was God's will to include Gentiles.

Ultimately, the entire body must be energized by the vision. Church growth took place beyond Jerusalem when the entire body of believers, not just the apostles and elders, began to proclaim the message everywhere. "Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4).

From the beginning of our church in Austin, I have sought to cast a vision to the congregation and, as time went on, especially to the leaders who have developed. Periodically, I speak to the entire congregation about where we are as a body and where we are going. Sometimes, I simply take a few minutes during a service. At other times, I teach a Bible study on a principle of church growth that I believe to be particularly important at the time. And sometimes I preach a message that God has laid on my heart, challenging the people as a body to meet the need of the hour, seize the opportunity, make the necessary consecration, or rise to the next level of growth. In these comments or messages, I may use testimonies or statistics to demonstrate where we are in the life of our church, as a means of showing where we can and should go.

For example, if a number of families are undergoing trials, I may explain to the church that the church is under spiritual attack. Those who are in trials should not be dismayed but should realize that the church is in a spiritual battle. If everyone will join the battle with prayer, faith, worship, and mutual support, then the church will emerge victorious, and it will enter into the next wave of revival.

Similarly, when the church experiences great revival, I make sure that the entire church is aware of the victories being won, so that everyone can seize the spiritual opportunities. If the church seems to be in a temporary lull, I explain that there are seasons and cycles of growth but if everyone will remain faithful then the church will continue to progress steadily toward its ultimate growth goals.

The weekly church bulletin is a helpful tool for casting and maintaining vision. We distribute the bulletin to every teen and adult in attendance on Sunday, and we also mail one to every family that is absent. Each issue includes a short message from the pastor that highlights special plans and events and communicates the pastor's heartbeat as related to present circumstances. Each issue also contains a list of victory

reports—brief testimonies of water baptisms, Spirit baptisms, healings, special answers to prayer, financial supply of faith promise commitments for missions, and so on. These messages and reports build faith, maintain momentum, and help people see the larger picture of what God is doing in the church.

As leaders emerged in the church, we started having leadership meetings to plan, train, and inspire vision. Currently, we conduct a ministers class every other week for licensed ministers and ministers in training, a leadership development class once a month for all who are interested in acquiring leadership skills, and a ministry preparation class once a month for youth who feel some type of call to ministry upon their lives. (See chapter 7.)

Once a quarter, we have a leadership team meeting, which consists of the pastor, assistant pastor, secretary-treasurer, department heads, and spouses. (We probably need to meet monthly.) At this meeting we plan the church calendar for the next quarter, schedule major events six months to a year in advance, discuss policies and procedures, discuss current problems or needs, and have fellowship. This meeting usually takes place Saturday evening or Sunday at the noon meal. Some of our departments have monthly or quarterly meetings for their personnel. As pastor, I meet weekly or biweekly on an individual basis with ministers and department heads.

We also conduct an annual leadership retreat for department heads and spouses, which has proved invaluable for inspiration, instruction, long-range planning, and team building. Each retreat has a theme—such as organizing for growth, becoming an effective people helper, working as a team, cultivating influence—with a speaker and several sessions devoted to that theme. The chosen speaker is instrumental in helping us to select and focus on our theme. I also share my vision and guidance with the leaders. When our church was seven years old, we held the first such retreat, from Thursday night to Saturday noon. Our main speaker was a specialist in leadership and management. He led us in developing a vision statement for our church and then a list of goals based on this statement. The team spent several hours developing the goals and agreeing upon the precise wording. The result was a shared vision, a clear understanding of our goals, and a personal commitment from each leader to implement these goals.

After the retreat, each department met with its own workers and in some cases its entire constituency to develop specific objectives that would enable the department to

advance the overall goals of the church. These objectives were to be “SMART”: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time oriented.

Here is the vision statement that our church formulated:

*The mission of New Life Church is to evangelize and equip people with the gospel of Jesus Christ in Spirit and truth for the glory of God.*

## **GOALS**

Based on our vision statement, we then adopted the following eight goals, four specifically related to evangelism and four specifically related to equipping (discipleship):

### *Evangelizing*

- Provide friendly internal and external relations.
- Promote missions awareness and support.
- Increase contacts.
- Promote effective means of follow-up.

### *Equipping*

- Build personal relationships and strong family units.
- Provide continuous education for everyone.
- Increase involvement.
- Promote godly disciplines.

## **OBJECTIVES**

After our leadership retreat, our departments established specific objectives for the next year to implement the church’s goals in their areas of responsibility. These objectives can be periodically reviewed, adapted, or replaced with new ones as needed. Here are examples from three of our twelve departments: care groups, music, and young families. These objectives were formulated respectively by the care group leaders, the choir and musicians, and the young families Sunday school class.

### ***Care Groups***

#### *Evangelizing*

- Each care group will have at least one individual who is available to teach a home Bible study.
- New care group members will be taught a home Bible study.

#### *Equipping*

- Every member within a care group will be contacted once per month.
- Every member within a care group will be prayed for once per week.
- Members who are absent will be contacted on a weekly basis.
- Each month, one care group will meet together for Thursday night prayer at the church. (For those farther out, they may meet in a home.)
- All care group leaders will turn in their weekly reports by Wednesday of each week.

## ***Music***

### *Evangelizing*

- Provide the congregation with all worship song lyrics (projected).
- Compile an anthology of songs for praise singers and musicians.
- Sing a song representing a mission field once a quarter.
- Pursue evangelism through at least two singing events in the Austin community.
- Invite all visitors to special musical events.

### *Equipping*

- Keep rehearsal attendance of all choir members.
- Promote family sing-alongs in conjunction with other church functions.
- Encourage choir members, soloists, and praise singers to attend a church music seminar or workshop.
- The choir will host fellowship rehearsals once a quarter to recruit new members and learn new songs.
- The children's choir will rehearse on a monthly basis and sing every fifth Sunday.
- All choir members and praise singers will pray in the prayer room before the service in which they are scheduled to sing and will participate in special days of prayer and fasting.

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## ***Young Families***

### *Evangelizing*

#### *Planning*

- I will shake hands and speak to five people every service and make myself available to be a friend by being sensitive, prayerful, and observant.
- I will become involved in the support of missions by doing one of the following every month: (a) give a minimum of \$5.00 to missions; (b) correspond with one missionary kid; or (c) pray for a specific missionary family.
- I will invite five friends, relatives, or acquaintances to church or a young families activity during the year.

- I will assist in the organized follow-up program of the church by making a minimum of five contacts per month during the year.

#### *Equipping*

- I will develop friendships with other young families by attending Sunday school class and a minimum of one young family activity each quarter.
- In an effort to continue my Christian education in order to learn more of God's Word and prepare to teach others, I will attend Sunday school class and Wednesday night Bible study, and participate in small study groups as they are established.
- I will become involved in at least one of the departments or other functions of the church (e.g., choir, outreach, drama, Sunday school, maintenance) during the year.
- I will commit to fast one day a week, participate in prayer before church one service a week, and develop personal daily prayer and Bible study.

### **PERSONAL VISION**

In addition to a vision for the church, it is helpful for a minister to develop his or her own personal vision for ministry. Over the years, I have tried to articulate my own vision, goals, and objectives in ministry, first for my own benefit and then for those I am leading. Doing so has helped me to think clearly about my ministry, communicate more effectively to those I am leading, and enhance accountability to God, myself, and others.

Recently, I asked each minister in our church to formulate a personal vision statement, and we spent time discussing the ideas that we had. Here is my own:

#### *My Commitment to Ministry*

1. *I will affirm and reaffirm the fundamentals of the apostolic faith and Christian living, to myself and to the people I serve.*
2. *I will pursue<sup>31</sup> life in the Spirit—including communion with Christ, the leadership of the Spirit in all things, and the anointing of the Spirit in all that I do.*

3. *I will seek a balanced, well-rounded life and ministry:* in Spirit and Word, in preaching and teaching, in evangelism and discipleship.
4. *I will love, respect, and encourage people.*
5. *I will be merciful, and I will believe in people.* If I am to err, I will err on the side of mercy. I will give people the benefit of the doubt. I will bend, but not break, in order to give people the opportunity to grow and develop.
6. *I will not seek personal gain, position, or glory.*
7. *I will serve God and serve people.*

### A GROWTH MENTALITY

If a church is to grow consistently, it must begin to think and act like a larger church. For instance, when a church is very small, it is tempting to conduct services very informally—not starting on time if some of the regular attendees are late, asking for special songs on the spur of the moment, not choosing any worship hymns or choruses in advance, allowing lengthy and irrelevant testimonies. But this operating style teaches the people to remain small in their thinking, and it communicates to visitors that the church is not serious about growth. While it is important to maintain spontaneity, warmth, and inspiration, the church must operate in such a way that it communicates to both members and visitors that it is planning for growth. They must be able to visualize a larger church, and they can only do so if the church operates as if it is growing.

In a small church, the pastor can regularly visit the homes of all the members, daily visit everyone who is in the hospital, and personally tend to most spiritual needs. If members expect him to do all this work alone, however, the church will not be able to grow beyond the size that one leader can personally maintain—probably 100 to 150 people in regular attendance. To overcome this barrier, the pastor needs to train the people to minister to one another and to accept ministry from other qualified leaders. For example, he should train and delegate others to assist with visits and calls, and teach the people to accept these leaders as representing himself and the church. The pastor must foster a growth mentality in which people expect that departments, programs, policies, and procedures will periodically be evaluated, modified, and upgraded. Leaders should continually expose themselves to new ideas, recommendations, and suggestions through books, periodicals, conferences, meetings, discussions, and input from coworkers and constituents. A



growing church is flexible, innovative, open to new ideas, and open to change. It constantly seeks to improve its effectiveness.

## CHANGE

People tend to resist change, and too much change is dangerous, yet change is an essential part of growth and therefore of life itself. All living organisms must continue to change in order to grow and continue to grow in order to live. The church is no exception.

Therefore, the pastor and other leaders need to create a suitable climate for change—on one hand assuring the congregation that the basic doctrine, teachings, and principles will never change, but on the other hand making clear that programs, methods, and modes of operation can and will change. Leaders should not promote change simply for the sake of change, but they should encourage creativity and innovation while discouraging turf protection and preservation of the status quo.

People need to realize that positions, job descriptions, and procedures may change and that change is not an indictment. The existing system may have worked well, but new circumstances—including social changes, church growth, and new members—can make change desirable or necessary. Therefore, people do not need to become defensive, nor should they take offense, when change affects their role. Only when there is openness to change can the church successfully incorporate new members.

Except in a crisis, leaders should not implement change suddenly or comprehensively, but gradually and incrementally. If they see the need for a significant change, they should build a consensus for it through meetings, discussion, and planning. They must first convince people of the need and then guide them toward a decision, letting them catch the vision and offer input so that the eventual decision becomes their own and not simply one that is imposed upon them.

Thus, change requires time, patience, cultivation of people, and development of an attitude that accepts change. Leaders, especially those who are new in their position, must spend more time earning respect, winning confidence, and proving their reliability than they spend in planning, promoting, and executing changes. Once they establish their credibility and create a climate for change, then specific changes will become relatively easy. Even when a leader enjoys great respect, however, he must continually

work through the proper channels, respect people's opinions, build consensus, and reserve his use of authority for when it is truly necessary. If he does not, he can quickly expend his influence in a few ill-considered, unilateral decisions. In this case, the leader must be quick to apologize and must restore his influence by rebuilding relationships.

Sometimes a new endeavor will fail, but occasional failure is the price of innovation and success. If we start five programs and one fails, we are still farther ahead than if we did not start any. While we should not start something without sufficient planning, commitment, and resources, sometimes the best plans fail. When they do, we learn from the failure and change direction or perhaps try again later in a different way. For instance, at New Life we began a Spanish-language ministry three times before attaining success.

People must learn to be flexible in their positions of service. For instance, the church may establish a policy of rotating one member off the church board every year and adding one new member. Members must learn that methods and programs are not sacred—those that become unproductive or out-moded need to be changed. They should also realize that some new methods may not work as intended, but in order to grow it is necessary to try new ideas—retaining those that work and discarding those that do not. It is not failure when a new method does not work, but it is failure if we refuse to try new methods or stubbornly cling to ineffective methods.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

Leaders must continually plan for the future while attending diligently to the work of the present. They must prepare for future growth. For instance, any outreach-minded pastor would be thrilled to win one hundred souls in a year—especially if he could retain a strong majority of them. For this dream to become a realistic objective, however, he must ask himself and his church several key questions. The following questions and examples are not exhaustive but illustrative of the kinds of issues they must address. Subsequent chapters will deal more specifically with some of them.

1. *How will the church effectively reach this many people?* The church needs to develop strategies for intercessory prayer, effective publicity, effective outreach, special evangelistic services, and a visitor-friendly approach.

2. *What will the church do with people when they come?* The church must develop

departments, classes, and activities that meet the social and spiritual needs of people of various ages and backgrounds. It also needs an effective discipleship program to incorporate people into the church, as well as an open attitude that makes it easy for new people to become fully integrated into the body. People of all backgrounds should be able to see that they can quickly become involved in the full range of social and spiritual activities of the church and that they have the opportunity to attain positions of recognition, influence, and leadership.

3. *How will the church expand its structure and leadership as it grows?* It will have to increase the number of departments, Sunday school classes, care groups, and activity groups. To do so, it must increase the number of volunteer staff and ultimately the number of paid staff. From the outset, then, the pastor should begin leadership training and development. He should identify (at least in his own thinking) potential leaders and then invest time in preparing and qualifying them for leadership roles. Department heads and activity coordinators should continually look for qualified workers and for others who could become qualified through encouragement and training. It is a good idea for leaders to develop assistants—not only to help in the present but to receive on-the-job training for leadership positions in the future.

4. *What kind of facilities will the church need as it grows?* At every phase of growth, the pastor and other leaders should think about what the church will need for the next level. They should formulate definite plans for the next two to five years and long-range ideas beyond that. They should plan the specific steps that will help them reach their goals in the desired time. When it comes to building, it is never too soon to begin dreaming, researching, praying, saving money, and working on site and floor plans. Unexpected obstacles, delays, and cost increases are inevitable, so the sooner the planning begins the sooner the project can become a reality.

When our church was about nine months old, we held our first annual business meeting. I presented to the small group of people several proposals for purchasing land. I explained that we did not yet have the necessary funds and that we would not purchase anything until we could cover the monthly payments by our regular church income, not counting any special pledges. However, I presented six options to show them what kind of land was available and what the costs were. My purpose was to present the challenge and to get them to think about the future. I wanted them to begin praying for God to supply the need and to begin planning their finances so that they would be ready to help when the time

came.

My presentation jolted some of them, because they thought we were too small to consider purchasing anything. I carefully explained that we would not do anything rashly, hastily, or without full congregational approval, yet it was never too soon to pray, plan, and prepare for a miracle. Afterwards one of our solid members, a certified public accountant, cautioned me to be very careful, inasmuch as we were not likely to grow very fast and he had seen other situations end in failure because of acting too rapidly on “faith” (presumption) and not on reality. I assured him that we would take no action until we had a suitable budget and a track record of meeting that budget.

Eight months later, after much prayer, fundraising, and diligent searching, we were able to buy four acres of land in a good location at a relatively low price per square foot—although the total cost was very high for a small church. The Lord supplied miraculously, but we had prepared for the miracle. We did what we *could* do—we prayed, planned, and worked—and God did what we could *not* do. If we had not planned strategically, we would not have been in a position to receive God’s provision.

Two years later, our rented building was full, we had the momentum of revival, and we urgently needed to build. Launching the building program was quite a financial challenge, however. By this time, we had a church board composed of local members, and the accountant was on the board. I presented our situation to the board and offered three options: (1) build now, (2) save money for another year until our financial situation grew stronger, or (3) do nothing for the foreseeable future. I wanted to build immediately, and I had worked out a budget that would make this possible, but it would still take a giant step of faith. I needed strong support from our lay leadership and congregation.

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The accountant immediately spoke up. Inwardly, I worried that his advice would be to wait, for I knew how conservative he was in financial matters. Instead he gave this counsel: “The risk of not building is greater than the risk of building. We have momentum, but if we do not plan for continued growth, we will stop growing, and in fact we will start declining. We need to build now.”

And we did. It took further miracles of God, but by the end of the next year we were in our own new building. We obtained site plan approval for two phases, and we built the first phase with future growth in mind. In just over two years we doubled in attendance,

thanks in large part to the new building. Here is a summary of our building program to date:

- 1992 founding of church in our home; obtaining of rented building after one month
- 1993 purchase of land
- 1994 development of site plan and building plan
- 1995 approval of site plan, building permit, and financing; beginning of construction
- 1996 completion of phase 1 building (auditorium to seat 300, foyer, fellowship hall, offices, classrooms, parking)
- 1997 construction of second floor, providing additional classrooms, offices, and guest quarters
- 1998 site work for phase 2 (adjoining phase 1) 1999 approval of building permit; beginning of construction of building
- 2000 completion of phase 2 (new auditorium to seat 800, foyer, prayer rooms, additional parking)
- 2001 remodeling of phase 1 auditorium into a gymnasium and fellowship hall and the addition of classrooms upstairs

As this list illustrates, we had to plan for growth every step of the way. We carefully considered future needs while providing for present needs. In some cases, this meant spending extra time and money to prepare properly for the future and to keep our options open. As a result, we have been able to grow steadily without serious hindrance or delay.

## **FINANCIAL AND LEGAL PLANNING**

A key factor <sup>37</sup>in growth is financial planning, including an annual budget. Our church ledger is on computer, and our office computers are networked, so I can check the ledger at any time. I receive a weekly update from the treasurer, provide quarterly statements to our church board, and present annual statements to the entire church at our annual business meeting in January. I keep a close eye on our cash flow, and all expenditures over fifty dollars must have pastoral approval. Every week I compare our income and expenses with the budget to date to see where we are and to make adjustments as needed.

Without careful attention to the budget and close management of our funds, we would

never have been able to build our own building, and without our own building most of our growth would have never taken place. It is no exaggeration, then, to say that financial management has been an essential part of our growth. If the pastor does not have this kind of expertise, he or she needs to obtain assistance in this area from the church board, the treasurer, a business manager, an administrative assistant, an accountant, or some combination of them.

Planning also encompasses the proper setup and organization of the local church, including attention to legal, tax, and accounting matters. In these areas the assistance of a lawyer and an accountant is vital. While this subject goes beyond the scope of this book, appendix A provides a basic outline for organizing a church legally.

## **CONCLUSION**

In all our planning, we must realize the importance of prayer. Our wisdom and understanding are lacking, and we do not know the future. Therefore, we can only expect our plans to be productive when we receive direction from God.

Planning requires extra time, money, and effort, but it is certainly worthwhile, for planning is the foundation of future growth. Planning alone does not bring growth, however. Many people have wonderful plans, but these plans never materialize. Translating plans into reality requires much hard work and persistence—our next key to church growth.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PERSISTENCE

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*Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient (James 5:7-8).*

*But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry (II Timothy 4:5).*

**J**ames explained that we must wait patiently for the coming of the Lord, just as the farmer waits patiently for the harvest. The farmer is totally dependent upon the blessings of God—the sunshine, the rain, and the miracle of life in the seed. He cannot force growth to take place but must allow it to develop and unfold naturally. Yet he does not sit by idly and wait for God to work. He cannot do what God must do, but God will not do what he can do. Therefore, the farmer works diligently and at the same time waits patiently. The combination of diligent effort and patience is persistence.

The Christian life requires persistence. Jesus taught the need for it: “Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1). Paul’s life was characterized by persistence: “I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14).

Christian ministry also requires persistence. Despite persecution, the apostles continued to preach and teach daily in the Temple and from house to house (Acts 5:40-42). To establish the church in Ephesus, Paul held discussions in the school of Tyrannus every day for two years (Acts 19:9-10). As the New Testament repeatedly records, the apostles persevered in their ministry despite intense opposition and hardship.

Paul described the circumstances in which he and other apostles ministered: “To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and

homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now” (I Corinthians 4:11-13). “We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” (II Corinthians 4:8-9).

Paul exhorted Timothy to work hard to fulfill his ministry—continually being watchful, enduring afflictions, and reaching for the lost (II Timothy 4:5). He compared the preacher’s responsibilities to those of a soldier, an athlete, a farmer, a workman, a vessel, and a servant (II Timothy 2).

### **A REALISTIC VIEW OF CHURCH GROWTH**

In short, growing a church is hard work! It takes effort, time, patience, and persistence. When we hear reports of great revival and church growth, we should rejoice, but we should not think that there are shortcuts to growth. Instead, we should realize two important truths.

First, someone generally has labored diligently for a long time to lay the foundation for growth. If a minister seemingly builds a quick work, he is probably benefiting from the efforts of others over many years. In my own case, I am deeply indebted to the training I have received from my father and mother, to the many advantages afforded by the United Pentecostal Church International, and to the apostolic ministry of many people over the years. In our congregation are people who first heard the gospel on a foreign mission field. I am reaping a harvest from the labor of home and foreign missionaries, fellow pastors, and even ministers who have retired or deceased.

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Second, even when there is quick growth, significant effort is still required to ensure long-term results. For instance, if many people quickly and easily come into the church, then it will likely take quite a battle to retain and establish them solidly in truth and holiness. On the other hand, if there is slow but steady growth, then much of the work of discipleship will already have been accomplished during the conversion process. Either way, a significant amount of work will be involved. The point is not that we should prefer one type of growth over the other, but to recognize that however growth takes place, it will require hard work, patience, and persistence to see lasting results.



Some ministers continually search for a pathway to rapid success. This approach often results in disillusionment or deception.

Disillusionment comes about when they identify a success formula and operate accordingly but the predicted results do not materialize. One minister was convinced that the key to planting a church was prayer and fasting. He went to a major metropolitan area, adopted a strict routine of extensive prayer and fasting, and began services. Unfortunately, he was never able to establish a work, and he became quite disillusioned because it seemed that God had failed him. In reality, while a personal relationship with God—developed through prayer and fasting—is indeed an important component of church planting and growth, no single method is the infallible key to success, nor can we earn spiritual results by doing good works.

Deception can take place when ministers seek rapid growth and revival without taking into account the need for persistence. In some cases, they identify a certain doctrine or practice as the key to growth even though they cannot demonstrate this point from Scripture. Consequently, they abandon sound biblical principles, and this approach leads them further into error. Typically, the key that they have identified does not in fact lead to the results they expect, so they drift farther and farther away from their biblical foundation. In many cases, they eventually redefine success by compromising apostolic doctrine, apostolic lifestyle, or both, so that they can finally claim the success they seek.

Some ministers achieve significant church growth but then promote a favorite idea as the key to growth, even though their own story of success involved a number of factors. They may neglect to mention hard work and persistence, and those who seek to learn from them do not think about this factor either. The reason is that most people desire more glamorous and exciting answers. All too often, the followers employ the recommended plan only to find that they do not achieve the same results. In many cases, they need persistence more than they need a particular method.

## **COMMITMENT OF TIME**

If a pastor really wants his church to grow, he must make a significant commitment of time—both in hours per day and in years. In this respect, he must think like an entrepreneur or a professional. An entrepreneur expects to work long, hard hours and to spend several years establishing his business. Similarly, after a lawyer spends seven

years earning his law degree, he still expects to work for several years to become a partner in his law firm or to start his own practice. And during those years, he will work much more than forty hours per week. A doctor also spends years in school, internship, and specialization, working long hours.

Likewise, a minister should expect to spend several years in preparation for effective ministry, whether by schooling, on-the-job training, or both. Then it will probably take him three to five years as pastor before he really establishes the type of relationships within the church and community that are necessary for lasting growth. And it will take long hours of hard work to accomplish his job.

I spent seven years in college and eleven years in full-time ministry before I started a church. In my pastoral work, I have benefited greatly from these years of study and experience. I have been able to work much more efficiently and effectively than if I had started a church in my early ministry. This is not to say that no minister should become a pastor in his early ministry, but simply that he needs to have realistic expectations about his work. If God has called him to pastor a church, then he should do his best, recognizing that if he is diligent and persistent he can expect his effectiveness to increase over time.

A growth-minded pastor should plan to work at least forty hours per week, not counting service times. (After all, that is what lay members have to do.) And that is just to see average results. If he wants to see greater results, he will probably need to work fifty to sixty hours per week and sometimes more. Here is a typical week for me:

- *Monday* is my day off. However, I will probably spend one or two hours taking care of urgent matters or making calls in the evening.  
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- *Tuesday through Friday*, I usually work in the office from 9:00 Am to 5:00 Pm, working through lunch or using lunch as a meeting time. (My goal is to arrive around 8:00 Am but to reserve the first hour for prayer, Bible reading, and study.) On most of these evenings, I will spend two or three hours in midweek service, special church functions, counseling, telephone calls, visits, or outreach. Then, late at night is my best time for reading, writing, and study—after the children are in bed and it is too late for telephone calls.
- *Saturday* is a busy day with calls, visits, counseling, meetings, special events,

outreach, and study. While this is a good day to make appointments with people who are not available during the week, I keep my schedule flexible, for I need time for family and also to prepare for Sunday.

- *Sunday* is usually spent at church from 8:00 Am to 10:00 Pm, with preparation, services, classes, meetings, and informal, on-the-spot counseling. When our church was smaller, I would take several hours for dinner and for relaxation at home, and occasionally I still do, but we now schedule many Sunday dinner functions at church—fundraisers, potlucks for new people, and departmental meetings. On the remaining Sundays, dinner is often provided for our family by members of the church. This plan was initiated by our care groups to accomplish three goals: (1) show appreciation to the pastor, (2) provide an opportunity for different families to eat with and visit with the pastor, and (3) help the pastor make efficient use of his time on this hectic day.

With this schedule, it is not unusual for me to work ten to fourteen hours per day. Sixty hours per week is typical, and it is not uncommon for me to work more. While I enjoy my work, I also enjoy family and personal time. As much as possible, I try to schedule recreational activities such as reading, swimming, racquetball, chess, the symphony, vacation, and so on. The point is not to become a workaholic but to keep up with the necessary work of the church. We must learn to delegate responsibilities, as chapter 7 discusses, and to manage time wisely, but the fact remains that growing a church is hard work and consumes a lot of time.

### **PERSEVERING IN THE WORK**

Since we are seeking long-term, lasting results, we must be willing to work over a long period of time to obtain those results. A pastor may work for years with seemingly average results, but as long as he continues to feel confirmation from God, he should be faithful to his post of duty. God does not measure success as humans often do; He is more interested in our character and our faithfulness than in statistical results. If God has called us to do a work, we need to persist in that work until He releases us.

Sometimes we may question why we do not see greater results. It is appropriate to examine our attitude, motives, principles, and methods to see if any of them are hindering growth. If we find problems or inadequacies, we need to work on them. But many times

we are doing our best, by God's grace, and we simply need to persevere. When we do not know what else to do, we need to keep on doing what we know to do. Sometimes the answer we seek only comes by persistence.

When my wife and I came to Austin in 1992 to start a church, we did not quite know what to expect. In our first service, held in our home, we had eleven people—our immediate family of four at the time; my wife's parents; my wife's maternal grandparents, who lived an hour away but wanted to help us get started; one lady who moved from out of town; and two ladies who had been friends of our family for many years. We began contacting unchurched friends and acquaintances, and some of them visited for a while, but most did not come faithfully. Nevertheless, in ways that we had not foreseen, we soon gathered a few families and single adults who had a Pentecostal or charismatic background—some had recently moved to town, some were having meetings in their home, some had dropped out of church, and some were looking for a church home.

In three months, we were averaging thirty-three in service. Some people had been renewed to church, some were interested inquirers, and some were in home Bible studies, but we did not have one brandnew person whom we had baptized in Jesus' name and who had received the Holy Spirit under our ministry. In fact, we did not win our first convert until six months had passed. While many exciting things were happening, this was a frustrating time for me, because it seemed that we were having a difficult time winning new people to the Lord. I had to learn that God was bringing people who needed our ministry and doing it in His way and His time.

On a typical Sunday, I would teach the adult Sunday school lesson, and my wife would teach the children. Then we would gather together for worship; I would emcee and lead singing, and my wife would play the keyboard. My two boys, ages six and three, took the offering. Then I would preach and give the altar call. When people would come to pray, I would pray with them while my wife played music. Soon, however, I would rush to the door to catch people as they left, meet first-time visitors, and make sure they had filled out a visitor card. In the meantime, the seekers would stop praying. As I said, it was frustrating.

One Sunday, we had a special speaker. A lady who was in a Bible study attended that day, and she was deeply stirred. The next night she came to our house for prayer, counsel, and study. She repented in our den, we baptized her in a swimming pool, and as

she came out of the water she received the Holy Spirit. We had victory at last! Now we were ready for great revival.

In the next six months, however, we saw only one additional person—a backslider—filled with the Spirit. After our first anniversary, though, the pace began to pick up. That month we saw three receive the Holy Ghost—a backslider with a background in the Assemblies of God, a teenage boy, and an elderly, invalid Hispanic lady who responded to an advertisement in the newspaper. My wife taught a Bible study in her house, I baptized her in her bathtub, and she received the Holy Ghost at home a few days later.

What was the secret to this victory? We simply kept doing what we were doing. Over time, people from various backgrounds began to meld together as a body. After about a year, there was noticeable development in unity, worship, and prayer. Finally, we were enjoying an atmosphere that was conducive to faith and that was not solely dependent on my wife and me.

At this time a real breakthrough came. After fifteen months, we had special services with a pastor from a nearby city. He brought some of his congregation, and the worship was tremendous. At the end of the service, four people received the Holy Ghost!

In this second year, we had an average of one person per month to receive the Holy Ghost. The pace still seemed slow—but it was certainly better than one per year! The next year, the average was two per month, and the fourth year was much the same. Over the years we have seen a steady increase, so that in 2000, after eight years, we averaged well over two per week being filled with the Spirit. We are now believing God for an average of one per day, and indeed, in January 2001 we saw twenty-eight people receive the Holy Ghost in thirty-one days. That was more than our first two years combined.

Here is a graph that displays the number of people per year who have received the Holy Spirit in our assembly (excluding our jail services). The number for 2001 is a projection based on the first quarter.

This experience has confirmed to me that when we are doing the will of God, we simply need to keep on keeping on. God will bring revival in due time if we will be persistent and faithful.

Persistence with individuals has also paid off. We try to follow up on everyone who has been referred to our church and everyone who visits. (See chapter 6.) In a number of instances, people did not respond to our initial contact, but six months or a year later they did. We also try to stay in touch with people who have stopped coming regularly. We have been able to help some of them get back on track. In both situations, repeated contacts over a period of time—fliers, calls, cards, letters, and visits—have often made the difference. While we try not to be pushy or annoying, we want to show concern and interest over a period of time. Some churches tend to write off visitors or drop-outs if they do not return within a relatively short time, but we seek to maintain some form of contact if possible. As a result, a number of people are in our church today because of a persistent pursuit of their souls.

## CONCLUSION

Several years after starting the church in Austin, I was teaching a doctrinal seminar in the country of Belarus, which was a new mission field for the United Pentecostal Church International. At that time, our pioneer missionary had only two Spirit-filled converts, both of whom had received the Holy Ghost privately in their homes. After a year or more of services, with about forty in regular attendance, no one had received the Holy Ghost publicly.

The missionary asked me for advice on what might be wrong. I told him that he seemed to be doing all the right things. He had fostered a positive, faith-building, friendly atmosphere with good prayer, worship, preaching, teaching, and fellowship. I concluded that he simply needed to persevere and that God would give the increase.

Sure enough, <sup>120</sup>that Sunday three people received the Holy Ghost, including a first-time visitor. Today Belarus is aflame with apostolic revival. Even at that early stage, everything was already in place; the key to success in that situation was persistent faith.

Of course, hard work and persistence alone do not guarantee success. We can plant and water, but ultimately only God can give the increase (I Corinthians 3:6-7). Moreover, our labor must be in accordance with scriptural principles, and our persistence must be in a spiritual direction. Persistence in a worthy effort is commendable tenacity, but persistence in a misguided course of action is unreasonable stubbornness—and we cannot expect a reward merely for being stubborn.

We must learn to work smarter, not simply harder. When we apply this truth spiritually, we find that the foremost work of a pastor that will ensure both the qualitative and quantitative growth of a church is preaching and teaching.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PREACHING AND TEACHING

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*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (II Timothy 4:2, KJV).*

*And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient (II Timothy 2:24).*

**P**reaching and teaching, together with prayer, are the most powerful means that a pastor has to influence and transform people, both individually and collectively.

Therefore, they are essential tools in establishing and growing a church.

The early church grew by the preaching and teaching of the gospel. In Acts 2, three thousand people were added to the church through the preaching of the apostle Peter, and they continued in the faith through the apostles' teaching. They "gladly received his word," and "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:41-42). Thousands more were added to the church as a result of the healing of the lame man at the Temple, but they believed on Jesus not simply because of the miracle but because of the preaching that followed the miracle. "Many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand" (Acts 4:4).

The apostles employed preaching and teaching as the primary method of reaching souls, both in large meetings and in small groups: "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42). As the administrative responsibilities of the church grew, the apostles arranged

for the selection of deacons to assist them so that they could focus on their primary ministry, which consisted of prayer, preaching, and teaching: “We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4).

Paul reminded the Ephesian elders of his ministry among them, which was characterized by preaching and teaching, both in public meetings and in private homes: “I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you and taught you publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20:20).

### **THE POWER OF PREACHING AND TEACHING**

The Word of God has power to change lives. When Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, he boldly accused the crowd of killing Jesus: “Him ... you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death” (Acts 2:23). Instead of turning into a violent mob and seeking his own death, the people “were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’” (Acts 2:37). Preaching brought conviction, transformed their thinking, and led them to faith and repentance.

The ministry of the Word is the primary means by which people develop faith in God. “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Thus, to a great extent, we get what we preach and teach. If we preach repentance, people will repent. If we preach the baptism of the Holy Spirit, people will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. If we preach divine healing, people will have faith to be healed, and we will see many miracles of healing. If we teach principles of Christian living—such as developing the fruit of the Spirit, putting away ungodly attitudes, paying of tithes, avoiding sins of the<sup>20</sup> tongue, and wearing of modest clothing—then people will live accordingly.

Of course, not everyone will accept our message. But people who are sincere and who want to change their lives will believe what we preach and teach, especially if we explicitly base our preaching and teaching on the Word of God. If we consistently preach and teach the new birth and holiness of life, we will build a strong congregation of people who believe and obey these truths.

Some pastors are afraid that if they take a strong stand in these areas, their churches



will not grow as they wish. Actually, however, church growth studies have consistently shown that churches which expect a high level of commitment from their members tend to grow larger and more rapidly than those which do not.

Over the years, I have frequently been asked to speak on matters of doctrine and holiness to groups that did not have a strong commitment in these areas. Sometimes a pastor has asked me to teach a congregation that had experienced some opposition, wavering, or conflict. Sometimes a missionary has asked me to speak to a group that was in the process of embracing truth. I have found that when truth is presented with assurance, anointing, and biblical support, God confirms His Word and many people are convinced of the truth. If a church is weak in these areas, it is not primarily because the people refuse to listen or obey; it is primarily because they have not received positive, solid, consistent, biblical preaching and teaching in these areas. In short, if ministers will truly fulfill their biblical role of preaching and teaching, then they will build a church that is strong in doctrine and holiness.

Occasionally, a pastor will relax his or her stand on previously held convictions so that the church will grow more rapidly. In most cases, however, the church suffers, for members with strong beliefs and commitments leave—and they often are the most faithful financial supporters also. Those who stay typically begin to compromise their beliefs, and this process often takes them far beyond even what the pastor intends. In many cases, the church declines or even disbands. In a few cases, if the pastor has a dynamic personality or is able to provide frequent special attractions—such as music, drama, famous guests, and so on—the church may grow. However, a smaller and smaller percentage of people receive the apostolic new birth experience and follow an apostolic lifestyle. If the goal is to grow a truly apostolic church, only strong preaching and teaching will accomplish that goal.

The history of the Pentecostal movement provides a good example of the principle that what we preach and teach to a great extent determines the results we will see. The modern Pentecostal movement began in 1901 with the baptism of the Holy Spirit accompanied by the initial sign of speaking in tongues. All the Pentecostals received this experience; it was their distinction. The early leaders, such as Charles Parham, William Seymour, and William Durham, spoke of an initial conversion experience of faith, but they stressed that all believers should be baptized with the Spirit in order to be in the New Testament church and in the Rapture.

In 1916, the movement split into two distinct doctrinal camps—trinitarians, of which the Assemblies of God is a major representative, and Oneness believers, of which the United Pentecostal Church International is a major representative. Over the years, the Assemblies of God has aligned with evangelicals, emphasizing that full salvation takes place at confession of faith and holding that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is an optional experience subsequent to the new birth, simply providing extra power. By contrast, the United Pentecostal Church teaches that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is an integral part of the salvation experience. Today, approximately thirty to fifty percent of members of Assemblies of God churches have received the Holy Ghost, while ninety percent or more of youth and adults who attend United Pentecostal churches have received the Holy Ghost.

Both movements started with the same experience and the same leaders. Why, over the years, has such a difference emerged? The answer lies in the different emphasis of preaching and teaching. In a typical Assemblies of God service today, one is likely to hear a Baptist-style invitation to make a decision for Christ, while a typical United Pentecostal service will end with a strong appeal for people to receive the Holy Ghost. We get what we preach.

## **PREACHING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

Preaching is the method that God has ordained for the salvation of souls. “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . . For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe” (I Corinthians 1:18, 21). While a variety of methods may be effective in attracting people to church, ultimately it will take strong preaching to lead them to biblical faith, repentance, water baptism in Jesus’ name, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Thus, preaching should be the main emphasis and climax of our worship services.

To preach means to proclaim the gospel, which is literally the “good news.” In the New Testament, the two major Greek words for “preach” are *kerusso*, which means to herald or proclaim, and *euangelizo*, which means to announce the good news. Jesus came “preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God” and “preaching and bringing the glad

tidings of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14; Luke 8:1). He announced, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19).

These words describe deliverance from all the power and effects of sin—in past, present, future; for body, soul, and spirit; in this life and in the life to come.

First and foremost, the gospel includes the means of entrance into the kingdom of God through faith, repentance, water baptism, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The first aspect of the gospel that Jesus proclaimed was repentance and faith (Mark 1:14-15). He also explained that to enter the kingdom of God we must be born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5). Closely associated with this message of salvation is the message of healing (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; Luke 9:6).

According to I Corinthians 15:1-4, the basic gospel message is that Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. The apostle Peter preached this message on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:22-36). Then he explained that the proper response to the gospel is repentance, water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-39). By repentance we die with Christ, by water baptism we are buried with Christ, and by the baptism of the Holy Spirit we are resurrected with Christ. (See Romans 6:1-4; 7:6; 8:2, 10.) The Book of Acts describes the content of preaching as follows: “the word”; “the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ”; “peace through Jesus Christ”; “the Lord Jesus”; “the word of the Lord”; “the kingdom of God” (Acts 8:4, 12; 10:36; 11:19-20; 15:35; 20:25; 28:31). The apostle Paul described the content of his preaching as “Jesus Christ”; “the cross”; and “the gospel of Christ” (Romans 16:25; I Corinthians 1:18; II Corinthians 10:14). He admonished Timothy, “Preach the word!” (II Timothy 4:2).

From these scriptural references, we learn important lessons about the purpose, content, audience, and tone of preaching.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of preaching is to lead people into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, to confirm them in that relationship, and to motivate them to live according to the

new way of life. Our purpose is not to win an argument, to impress people with our eloquence, to make people feel good, or to share our psychological, social, political, and cultural views. While the specific focus of our sermons will vary, every message should in some way inspire the audience to believe in Jesus and to act upon that faith. At the end of the message it should be easy for someone to repent, be baptized in Jesus' name, receive the Holy Spirit, be renewed in the Spirit, make a consecration, receive deliverance, receive physical or emotional healing, or receive encouragement, strength, and direction.

## CONTENT

To be true to the apostolic pattern, our preaching should focus on the Lord Jesus Christ, deal with the major themes of Scripture, and offer salvation, deliverance, and healing. To ensure a balanced diet of the Word for the congregation, it is important for the preacher to pray for the mind of God, to study the Bible diligently, and to plan carefully.

*Prayer* is vital because we need a word from the Lord for the people and the occasion. God gives pastors insight as to the specific needs of their congregation at a particular time. Only God knows who will be in a certain service and what their needs are. While God uses a message to bless an entire congregation, often He uses it to speak to specific individuals and situations unknown to the preacher.

*Study of the Bible* is vital because our preaching must come from the Word of God, not our own philosophy. Every message should have a solid scriptural base. It is a good practice to read a text publicly and base the sermon on it, because doing so communicates to the audience that the preacher is expounding the Word of God, not promoting his personal agenda. Of course, the sermon should actually present the main idea of the text, rather than the text becoming merely a pretext for the preacher's own ideas. If the preacher cannot find a scriptural passage that legitimately contains the thought he wishes to convey, then he does not have a right to preach that thought.

While the Bible should always be our primary resource for sermons, it is helpful to read commentaries and other books about the Bible in order to understand clearly what the Bible says. Ultimately, our sermons must be rooted in the biblical text, but we can obtain sermon seeds from many sources. Seeds can come from personal experiences, sermons at conferences and camps, theological and devotional reading, even secular reading—in short, anything that stimulates creative thought. Often, the

source does not actually communicate the sermon idea but simply provides an inspirational spark. Upon receiving a possible sermon idea, the preacher should study the Bible carefully to ensure that the thought is indeed biblical and is strong enough to sustain a message.

*Planning* is vital to make our preaching relevant, interesting, and well rounded. Sometimes, I tentatively plan sermon topics several months in advance. I retain great flexibility, however, depending on the circumstances and the leading of the Lord as each week approaches. I often preach related messages on Sunday morning and evening or from one Sunday morning to the next. Occasionally, I will preach a series on a theme. Some examples are “The Threefold Cord of the Christian Life” (three messages on faith, hope, and love), “The Ten Commandments” (ten messages with new covenant applications), and “The Fruit of the Spirit” (nine messages). I break up the longer series with other messages for the sake of variety and spontaneity. I also like to take advantage of special occasions such as Easter, Mother’s Day, Pentecost, Fourth of July, and Christmas to preach on topical themes.

I keep a record of every message that I preach. By referring to this record, I avoid accidentally repeating a message. From time to time, I review and evaluate the topics I have selected, both to avoid getting in a rut and to ensure that I cover the major themes of Scripture. If I have not preached on certain important topics in a while, I will make a note to consider those topics in the near future. I want to make sure that I preach regularly on the Incarnation, the Atonement, repentance, the name of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the sanctified life, commitment, overcoming adversity, soulwinning, the Second Coming, our eternal destiny, and so on.

Scheduling guest speakers also helps the church to have a well-rounded diet. It is good to have a diversity of ministries both inside and outside the local church. In this way, we avoid too narrow of a focus, and we receive fresh direction, encouragement, and anointing. No one minister can continually meet all the needs of a congregation. Guest evangelists and teachers play a vital role in the life of the local church by inspiring faith, confirming the ministry of the pastor, and adding new dimensions of ministry.

## AUDIENCE

To accomplish the purpose of preaching, the preacher must communicate to his audience; the audience must understand his message. Therefore, the preacher must

always keep his audience foremost in mind. If he wants to convert sinners, he must speak in a language that sinners understand. If he wants the church to grow, his preaching must be vis- itor-oriented. He should use examples, illustrations, and a manner of speech that relate to his congregation and his community.

The apostle Paul was always conscious of his audience. He said, “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are with- out law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (I Corinthians 9:19-22). To Jewish audiences, he preached from their Old Testament history (Acts 13). To Gentile audiences, he appealed to nature and reason (Acts 14:14-17). When he spoke to the philosophers in Athens, he found common ground in their religious tradition, reasoned from nature, and even quoted from a pagan poet to make his point (Acts 17:18-31). In all cases, of course, he was faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

If we want to reach people of diverse back- grounds, which the Lord has commanded us to do (Mark 16:15), we must preach with an awareness and respect for their diversity. Even if our audience is not diverse, we need to preach as if it were in order to train the church to invite people who are not like them and to assure them that, when they do, their guests will feel welcome. Thus, it is not appropriate to tell ethnic jokes, speak disparag- ingly of other denominations, or endorse a political party or candidate. We should not make a Democrat feel that he must become a Republican, or blacks feel that they must betray their cultural heritage in order to be accepted in a local church. In fact, it is helpful to incorporate elements of worship, illus- trations, and observations that are particularly rel- evant to people of different backgrounds, such as singing a chorus or solo in Spanish or noting the significance of Martin Luther King Jr. at the time of his holiday.

In addition, we should explain special religious terminology when necessary and avoid religious jargon. The Bibles uses theological terms such as “jus- tification,” “propitiation,” and “atonement” that need to be explained to a general audience. Pentecostals also have a special vocabulary—such as “shouting” (demonstrative worship,

dancing, shaking), “praying through” (praying until victory comes), and “slain in the Spirit” (falling under the power of God). If the preacher admonishes the audience to “pray through,” a visitor may well wonder, Pray through what? As much as possible, the preacher should use terms that everyone easily understands.

When I preach about receiving the Holy Ghost, I usually speak of “the Holy Spirit” instead of “the Holy Ghost.” The two terms are equivalent, and the King James Version uses both, but in modern English, “Spirit” is more accurate and understandable, especially to people who are not schooled in the King James Version. Receiving a “ghost” is strange to them, but they can easily grasp the significance of receiving God’s Spirit. I often state that there are two simple conditions for receiving the Holy Spirit—repentance and faith—and then briefly explain each: “Repentance means being sorry for our sins, confessing our sins to God, asking His forgiveness, and making up our minds to turn away from the life of sin by God’s grace. Faith means to trust in Jesus instead of ourselves, to rely upon His saving work at Calvary instead of our own works, and to respond in obedience to the preaching of the gospel.” Then I explain that when a person receives the Holy Spirit he will “speak miraculously in a language he has never learned.” If I merely say “speak in tongues,” some people will not understand at all, while others will think they understand but will actually have a different concept from what the Bible teaches.

Often, after a time of demonstrative worship, I will say, “If you are a visitor, our worship may seem unusual to you, but let me explain. First, people are responding sincerely, from the heart, as the Spirit of God moves upon them. Second, we get our methods of worship—such as raising our hands, praying aloud, and dancing in the Spirit—from the Bible itself. We don’t want you to feel that you must worship as we do or imitate someone around you. All we ask is that you open your heart to God and respond to Him sincerely in your own way.”

If there has been an unusual move of the Spirit or an extended time of deep worship, I may explain, “God is moving in this place. We are doing everything in order, but it is a divine order. As pastor, I am directing the service, but I recognize that God has intervened. When God wants to move in our midst, we need to set aside our agenda and allow Him to work. After all, if God is sovereign and if He is supernatural, then we ought to expect that sometimes He will supersede our plans and work in ways beyond our ability to orchestrate. And that is what we need!” After the operation of a vocal



supernatural gift, I may say, “God has spoken to us tonight, and we need to respond to Him. If you are not familiar with what has happened, you can read about it in I Corinthians 14. Everything is being done in scriptural order.” Throughout my preaching, I keep in mind that I am addressing both people who need to be born again and people who have been born again. Thus, I seek ways to apply the main thought of the message to both groups.

### TONE

Since preaching is the proclamation of good news, our preaching should be positive, inspiring, and faith-building. While we must take a stand against sin and while we must warn of judgment to come, our overall message should be one of hope, not condemnation. Jesus taught, “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17). We should not preach against sin without proclaiming God’s remedy—forgiveness for past sin and deliverance from present and future sin. We are not to tear down but to build up, “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15).

Since the gospel is first and foremost for sinners, if we offend sinners by a harsh presentation or a dogmatic statement that they are not spiritually prepared to receive, then we defeat our purpose for preaching. When preaching evangelistically to a general audience—which is the essence of preaching in the biblical sense of the word—we should present milk, not solid food. Even people who are born again may not always be able to handle a full presentation of truth; only mature saints with discernment can do so.

Paul wrote to a church, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able” (I Corinthians 3:1-2). “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:12-14). Just before a prophecy that relates to the outpouring of the Spirit, Isaiah explained, “Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little” (Isaiah 28:9-10).



For instance, it is not appropriate to attack people in the audience for not conforming to biblical standards of dress, because that is not the purpose of preaching. Instead, we must learn to accept people as they are and minister to them. Acceptance does not mean approval, but it means respecting them as persons and leading them to a personal experience and relationship with God through repentance and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Then, and only then, will they be spiritually equipped to receive instruction in holiness.

When I am preaching, I do not try to teach on themes of holiness and Christian living that presuppose maturity. I may allude to such a theme if my message lends itself to that, but I do so in a way that mature saints understand the point clearly while visitors and newcomers hear only a simple, uncontroversial concept. For instance, if something in my message relates to the lust of the eyes, I may mention that we need to be careful what we allow our eyes to dwell upon, especially considering the violence and immorality that are so pervasive in television and movies.

Since the mature saints have heard me teach extensively on this subject and know my stand against television, this statement gives scriptural reinforcement to my position. On the other hand, what I have actually said is not controversial; thoughtful people in society are concerned about the negative influence of the media. Thus visitors and new converts do not judge my statement as radical, yet they receive a seed thought that can later grow into a strong conviction. If, however, I said that all people should immediately dispose of their televisions, or that all television watching is sinful, then likely I would be perceived as fanatical and would not accomplish much. The mature saints already know my stand in detail, so they would not benefit. On the other hand, visitors and new converts might be so upset and confused by a strong statement that they would reject the rest of my message and never come back. The gospel would not have a chance to work in their lives.

We cannot help it if some people are offended by the gospel itself. Some will take offense at the preaching of the cross because it convicts them of their sin and they are not ready to admit their sin. (See I Corinthians 1:18-25; John 3:19-21.) In this case, the gospel works as intended, but people reject it. We cannot be ashamed of the gospel, yet we should do everything possible to avoid causing offense in any other way. (See I Corinthians 10:32-33.) That means even our presentation of truth must be

tempered—but not compromised—with wisdom and love. There is a time to speak and a time to be silent, and truth must be presented line upon line and precept upon precept.

Consistent church growth can only take place when the members of the congregation regularly bring friends, relatives, and acquaintances to church. They will do so only when they are confident that their guests will enjoy the service, be ministered to, and be blessed. If they are concerned that their guests might be bored, embarrassed, mistreated, frightened, or repulsed, they will not be motivated to bring new people, even though they themselves may be faithful in attendance. In this regard, the tone of the preaching is crucial. Harsh or unkind messages will not foster an atmosphere of growth. There is a time to preach about judgment—but with tears in the eye, the voice, or both. There is a time to proclaim truth boldly—but always in love.

## **PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF PREACHING**

For the most effective communication, each sermon should center around one main theme. To test whether a message is clearly focused, we ought to be able to write the main thought in one sentence, and all points of the sermon should relate to that main thought. It is helpful to choose a title that encapsulates or at least alludes to the central thought. The audience is not likely to follow, remember, or act upon a variety of thoughts, but they can go home with the main point, especially if it is conveyed by the title and appears clearly in the biblical text.

To be effective in the twenty-first century, the preacher must be time conscious. While he needs the liberty of the Spirit and should not be bound by a clock, if he wants a good prayer response at the end of the service he must be careful not to wear out the audience emotionally, psychologically, or physically. Often, a lengthy message is not caused by the move of the Spirit but by poor planning on the part of the preacher or lack of consideration of his audience.

For a typical service, I have found that half an hour provides plenty of time to communicate one main thought with supporting points and illustrations. If I end my message while people are still interested, excited, and eager for more, then they are much more likely to respond with prayer at the end. Moreover, if they realize in advance that the preaching will not be lengthy, they will not worry about the time but will pay more attention to the message and will anticipate the climax.

If I cannot completely cover a subject in the time I have allotted myself, I will divide my notes into two or three sermons on the same theme and preach them as a series. I may even make this decision in the middle of a message if I realize that I have gotten hold of something in the Spirit that is bigger than one message. This method enables me to deliver every- thing that is on my heart and yet be considerate of people's time.

At New Life Church, we have Sunday school at 10:00 Am, followed by morning worship at 11:00 Am. Since this service is when we have the most visitors, my message always features an evangelistic appeal. I typically preach for twenty to thirty minutes and give the appeal by noon or before. We do not have a formal dismissal, but after some have come to pray I announce that people are free to leave whenever they desire.

The Sunday evening service, which starts at 6:30, is primarily inspirational. More time is available, and no workers are scheduled for any other activity, so it is an opportunity for the whole church to worship and to hear from God. I usually preach for twenty to forty minutes. My goal is call people to prayer by 8:00 or shortly thereafter. This schedule allows plenty of time for prayer and fellowship after the service, yet it allows families to get to bed relatively early in prepa- ration for work and school the next day.

Sometimes there will be an extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit during the time of worship preceding the sermon. Many people respond to God spontaneously and receive what they need from God. In this case we extend the worship time, following the leading of the Spirit, but before ending the service I will usually preach a condensed message or at least exhort the congregation for five or ten minutes. My purpose is to explain and confirm what has just hap- pened in the Spirit, to minister to those who may not have fully understood ~~120~~ responded to what was happening, and to underscore the importance of the Word of God. These reasons are particularly relevant to visitors. If I decide to preach more than a few minutes and yet some people remain deep in prayer, I instruct them to go the prayer room while I preach.

### **APPEAL FOR PRAYER**

The essence of preaching is not oratory but the proclamation of the gospel. And the gospel demands a response. No message is truly complete, then, unless the preacher makes some type of appeal for action and the audience has some opportunity to respond. Thus, I end every message with a personal application and appeal.

I do not give an extended altar call, nor do I rely upon gimmicks or psychological tactics, but I issue a brief challenge based on the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. Since faith comes by the hearing of the Word, and since the Holy Spirit applies the Word to hearts, those who have opened their hearts to the Word and Spirit should be ready to respond. We simply need to make it easy for them to do so. Therefore, I use an inclusive approach, inviting all who feel the Lord drawing them.

I typically give a twofold appeal, rooted in the application of my message. First, I invite people who need to put their faith in Jesus Christ, repent, or receive the Holy Spirit. Then, I quickly invite others who need deliverance, strength, direction, renewal, or deeper consecration. I often state that no one is standing in judgment as to why someone comes to the altar, for all of us need to do so periodically. Frequently I suggest that people may ask someone nearby to join them in prayer at the altar, and sometimes I invite everyone to stand at the front. These variations are designed to make it simple for a person to come forward to pray. As a result, we always have a good number coming immediately to the altar after the message. This in itself makes it easier for others to come.

## **TEACHING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

As we have seen, the apostles placed great emphasis on teaching as well as preaching. The difference between the two is not volume or excitement but purpose and content. Preaching is the proclamation of the good news of salvation, but teaching consists of instruction in doctrine and Christian living. There is considerable overlap, and most pastoral preaching contains a great deal of teaching. Thus, much of our discussion of content, audience, and tone applies to teaching as well as preaching.

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To the young minister Timothy, Paul emphasized the importance of both biblical study and spirituality. He said that by continuing to be faithful in doctrine and spiritual life, the minister will save himself and those who follow him. “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (I Timothy 4:13-16).

Paul also explained that a minister needs to have the ability to teach, and he stressed the positive tone in which teaching should take place. The teacher must be gentle, patient, humble, and not antagonistic. While part of his job is to correct those who are wrong, he must do so with the clear understanding that people are not his enemy, but the devil is the enemy of both the disobedient hearers and the preacher himself. “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will” (II Timothy 2:24-26).

Being “able to teach” is one of the requirements for a bishop (pastor) (I Timothy 3:2). Titus 1:9 comments more fully on this qualification: “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” In Ephesians 4:11, the ministries of pastor and teacher are closely intertwined, so much so that some commentaries classify them as equivalent. Indeed, we may view the pastoral ministry as fundamentally an overseeing and teaching office.

If we want a strong church, we must have a strong teaching ministry. Preaching inspires faith, motivates commitment, and confirms direction, but teaching provides the practical guidance and instruction needed to become a disciple. If we neglect teaching, we will have a shallow congregation that will be as “children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (Ephesians 4:14).

The apostles had a strong teaching ministry (Acts 4:2; 5:21, 42). Barnabas and Paul spent a year teaching the church at Antioch in order to establish it, and they also spent much time teaching there later (Acts 11:25-26; 15:35). As a pioneer missionary pastor, Paul taught constantly for eighteen months in Corinth and for two years in Ephesus (Acts 18:11; 19:9-10).

## **PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF TEACHING**

Like our preaching, our teaching must be biblical. We do not have the right to teach our own philosophies, but we must teach the truth of God’s Word.

We must structure teaching into the life of the church. At New Life, we accomplish this goal in five ways:

- Individual Bible studies as an outreach tool
- Small group studies, including through-the- Bible classes and discipleship classes
- Sunday school classes for all ages
- Midweek Bible study for the whole church
- Brief instruction during worship and preaching

*First*, we use various Bible studies as an outreach tool—in homes, on the job, by appointment at church, or by video. These include *The Gospel of Jesus Christ* (one lesson), *Into His Marvelous Light* (one or two lessons), *The Life and Times of Jesus Christ* (four lessons), and *Exploring God's Word* (twelve lessons). Teaching a Bible study is an effective means of outreach because it explores Scripture in an informal, uncontroversial, friendly setting. It unleashes the power of the Word of God and at the same time builds personal relationships that are vital to soulwinning.

*Second*, when people begin to attend church regularly, and especially after they are baptized in water or receive the Holy Spirit, we encourage them to enroll in a twelve-week Bible study if they have not already done so. Following that, we urge the new convert to enroll in our twelve-week discipleship class. We conduct both of these classes in small groups on Tuesday night, and they are open to all interested persons. (See chapter 6.)

This plan ensures that new people will receive timely, pertinent instruction in the basics of Bible doctrine and Christian living. While we deal with these subjects in Sunday school and midweek Bible study, new people may have to wait quite a while before hearing a lesson on a specific topic that they need. The small group studies enable them to receive vital information immediately, in a setting that allows for questions, discussion, and building of personal relationships. The students typically form a strong bond with the teacher and with each other, providing additional stability and assistance to new converts. We acknowledge the graduates of these classes by presenting them with a certificate in a Sunday night service.

In addition to these basic classes, we also offer more advanced training for leaders. (See chapter 7.) *Third*, we conduct a full Sunday school for all ages, using the class

divisions and curriculum of Word Aflame Publications. To minister to the varied needs of adults, we offer seven adult classes: college and career (singles to age thirty-nine), young families (married adults and single parents to age thirty-nine), deaf, Korean, Christian twelve-step recovery (for people with a history of alcohol or drug addiction), and the sanctuary class. Our Spanish daughter work offers classes in Spanish. Single parents can choose either college and career or young families. Couples in which one spouse is older than thirty-nine and the other is not, may choose between the young families class and the sanctuary class. In general, the age classifications are not rigid but simply provide guidance; occasionally someone who qualifies for one of the other classes will prefer to attend the sanctuary class.

These classes offer teaching that focuses more specifically on the needs of people. They also provide greater opportunities for using various teachers and various teaching methods. Finally, they allow people to learn in smaller groups, enhancing discussion and bonding between people of similar stations in life.

Our Sunday school schedule is as follows:

- Staff prayer and announcements: 9:15-9:30 Am
- Staff in classrooms: 9:30-9:45 Am. They ensure that everything is ready, and they greet students as they come.
- Pre-session: 9:45-10:00 Am. There are planned activities for children. For youth and adults, many classes offer refreshments and fellowship.
- Lesson: 10:00-10:50 Am for youth and adults. They are dismissed in time to be in the sanctuary for worship promptly at 11:00 Am. For children, the time is 10:00-11:05, so that they leave their classrooms for children's church after the adults are already in their service.
- Children's church: 11:10-12:10 (in the fellowship hall). The dismissal time allows parents to come from the sanctuary to pick up their children. The nursery and toddler classes stay in Sunday school for the whole two hours. At present, the preteens alternate between extended class and adult worship, with some serving as student assistants in children's church. On fifth Sundays, the children's church comes into adult worship, and the children's choir sings.

Sunday school is quite effective in attracting families to the church, providing a basic Bible knowledge to everyone, preparing children to receive the Holy Spirit, and ministering to people of all ages in their own peer group. It is a vital part of the teaching



ministry of our church, which in turn is an important component of church growth.

*Fourth*, our midweek service (Wednesday night) usually features teaching by the pastor. Since the Sunday services feature preaching—evangelistic and inspirational messages—this arrangement gives us a balance of preaching and teaching throughout the week. Sometimes, we have special classes on Wednesday night. For example, periodically we schedule a series of lessons for the youth, such as *Worth the Wait* (four to five lessons). Wednesday night is also a good time to schedule other ministers in our church to preach and missionaries to speak. Sometimes, a minister in training will speak for about ten minutes before I bring the main message. Nevertheless, Wednesday night remains the only time for the pastor to teach the entire church, and as such, it is as important as the Sunday services.

Midweek Bible study begins at 7:30 Pm. I usually begin teaching by 8:00 or a few minutes after. My goal is to teach about forty to fifty minutes and to finish before 9:00. Although the main emphasis is on teaching, I usually make a brief appeal for prayer at the end, for when we teach the Word, God confirms His Word. Even though teaching is not as emotionally intense as preaching, and even though the presentation is more informational than motivational, we should never underestimate the power of the Word of God. If the teaching is biblical and anointed, then it is easy to take the last five minutes to make an appeal and to see the Lord work in a great way to apply the lesson to the hearts of people.

I try to provide a balanced diet of teaching, covering the major doctrines of the Bible, for everyone needs to be reminded periodically of important truths. (See I Corinthians 4:17; I Timothy 4:6; II Timothy 2:14; II Peter 3:1-2; Jude 3, 5.) Moreover, new converts are constantly being added to the church, and they need to hear important teachings directly from the pastor. I periodically survey what I have taught over the past year and make plans to cover the major doctrines that I have not addressed for a long time. On a regular basis I cover the doctrines of God, Christ, and salvation as well as principles of holiness and Christian living. Other important topics are the inspiration and authority of the Bible; angels and demons; human nature; the government and function of the church; the gifts of the Spirit, including healing; and the last things.

Each year, I teach a series of lessons on holiness, although I use various titles. One year, I taught a series on the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life,



covering practical holiness issues from that perspective. In these lessons, I emphasize holiness of heart, including the fruit of the Spirit, attitudes, and thoughts, and I focus on the principles of holiness as found in Scripture. However, I also make practical applications concerning such matters as speech, adornment, dress, hair, amusements, and stewardship of the body.

My Wednesday night lesson is directed primarily to the church. Nevertheless, we have visitors on Wednesday night, so I am careful to keep a positive tone and to explain concepts in an understandable way. When dealing with standards of conduct and dress, I often use understatement and humor. The mature saints fully grasp what I mean, while visitors and new converts do not receive such a strong admonition that they would be offended.

For instance, if I am teaching about the evils of television, in addition to Scripture I will usually provide secular statistics and contemporary quotations to support my points. Then I may say, “If you have a television, why not try an experiment? For the next month, log your TV-watching time, and make a commitment to pray each day for the same amount of time. You will soon find that one or the other will have to go, for you simply do not have time for both. And if you truly pray that much, the things of this world will become less and less important to you, and God will help you make the right decision. If you simply cannot bear to part with your TV, put it in the most inconvenient room of the house—such as the attic.”

In this way, I have clearly communicated my message to the audience—that most television programming is not conducive to Christian living and that they would do well to remove TV from their homes altogether. Yet I have not actually given a command. People who want to do the right thing will know what to do, but people who are not prepared to take this step will not take offense. Moreover, I have made visitors and new converts think about television in a new way, but I have not alienated them. In their state of worldliness or immaturity, I have not forced them to make a choice between coming to church or disposing of their television, between completely accepting my authority and admonition or completely rejecting it. As they continue coming to church, the proclamation of the Word and the work of the Spirit will lead them progressively to the best decisions for their spiritual life.

Sometimes, however, I must speak as plainly as possible. Thus, for leadership and

ministry positions in the church, I have developed guidelines of conduct and dress. (See appendix B.) I carefully explain these standards in meetings with the leadership team, the Sunday school staff, the choir, and other groups. In addition, at the beginning of every year, I designate one midweek service as a “saints meeting.” All visitors and new converts are sent to a special class where they receive an introduction to our church or a basic lesson on the Holy Spirit. Then I speak to the saints, emphasizing our holiness standards, dealing with current issues that face the congregation, and answering questions. I explain that our guidelines are mandatory for all leadership and representative roles in our church, but the goal is for all faithful attendees to follow this example. My purpose in the saints meeting is to ensure that there is absolutely no doubt in anyone’s mind where I stand on matters of doctrine and holiness.

While our church strives to be open to people of all backgrounds and to accept people where they are, we also want our members to know where we stand. We can best accomplish both goals by positive, faith-building, biblical preaching and teaching coupled with guidelines that are clearly stated and explained to mature believers.

*Fifth*, I take various opportunities during worship and preaching to insert some teaching. The subject of tithing is a good example. About once a year, I devote a Wednesday night Bible study to tithing, giving, or Christian stewardship. The discipleship class also covers the subject for new people. However, when we receive the offering, often I will take one minute to mention some aspect of giving, perhaps citing a verse of Scripture, pointing out what the faithfulness of people has enabled us to accomplish, or sharing a relevant testimony.

Depending on what happens during a service, I may briefly make a point about worship, prayer, ~~faith~~, testimonies, spiritual gifts, soulwinning, or some other pertinent subject. During preaching, I may teach briefly on a point related to my text. Prior to my main message, I may take a few moments to discuss an unrelated but needed thought. In this way, I can touch on a subject that is important to address or reinforce, yet not devote an entire service to it.

## CONCLUSION

The apostle Paul admonished the young minister Timothy to preach and teach the Word of God. “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be

ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (II Timothy 4:1-5).

Here we see that preaching and teaching are essential to building up the church. Although many in the last days will evade biblical teaching, we must continue to proclaim the truth at all times—“in season and out of season.” Our preaching and teaching must be strong and uncompromising—we are to “convince, rebuke, exhort”—yet with a positive tone of hope, love, and patience—“with all longsuffering.” While the pastor may primarily be the overseer and teacher of the church, yet he must also “do the work of an evangelist” by proclaiming the gospel to the lost.

As the Book of Acts closes, we find Paul in Rome under house arrest, yet still “preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him” (Acts 28:31). Despite the circumstances, we can and must always find a way to proclaim the Word of God. Whatever else we do, if we want to grow an apostolic church, we must have strong preaching and teaching that is biblical, positive, visitor-oriented, and faith-building. And, as we discuss next, to accompany the ministry of the Word we must have the power of the Holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### POWER OF THE SPIRIT

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*And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (I Corinthians 2:4-5).*

**G**rowing a church is a spiritual work. Therefore, the most important ingredient is not leadership principles, management techniques, or outreach methods, but the work of the Holy Spirit. It is possible to build a strong organization and attract many members by secular principles and methods, but if that were our only goal, we should start a sports franchise, organize an entertainment company, or join some historic denomination that owns great cathedrals and has millions of members. More than filling stadiums, our goal is to grow an apostolic church—called by the name of Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, and walking in holiness of life. Thus, from start to finish, we must rely upon God’s direction and power.

Depending on the Spirit does not mean that we can ignore all other principles of church growth. We cannot do what only God can do, but God will not do what we can do. God has designed the church so that His power is necessary for growth but not sufficient in the absence of diligent effort on our part.

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Our dependence upon the work of the Holy Spirit reminds us once again of the necessity of prayer. But we cannot measure the value of prayer simply by the number of hours that we pray. We must have effective prayer—and that occurs in the context of faith and expectation of the miraculous.

When Jesus gave the great commission, He specifically promised that miraculous power would accompany the preaching of the Word. The early church carried out His instructions to proclaim the gospel to everyone, and the Lord confirmed the Word with signs and wonders.

We find the account at the end of the Gospel of Mark: “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.’ So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen” (Mark 16:15-20). (See also Hebrews 2:3-4.)

The Book of Acts documents the truth of this account. The preaching of the apostles was accompanied by casting out of demons, speaking in tongues, divine protection from accidental harm, and divine healing of the sick. And these miracles were instrumental in attracting multitudes and adding believers to the church. (See Acts 2:6; 3:11; 5:12-14; 8:6-8, 13; 14:3.)

Paul stated that his missionary ministry was accomplished “in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ” (Romans 15:19). The key to his ministerial success was not “persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (I Corinthians 2:4).

Paul listed nine supernatural gifts of the Spirit that assist in building up the church. “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all”: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healings, the working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, different kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues (I Corinthians 12:7-10). It is God’s will for these gifts to be manifested in every local body of believers until the second coming of Christ. (See I Corinthians 1:2, 7.) His Word admonishes us, “Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts” (I Corinthians 14:1). (For further discussion, see *Spiritual Gifts* by David K. Bernard.)

We must always remember that “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). Therefore, we need spiritual weapons, not merely human programs and methods.

Indeed, II Corinthians 10:4-5 says, “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” In this context, the strongholds are not physical locations or supernatural beings, but they are located in the human mind and personality. To overcome them, we cannot rely on human planning, but we must have the strategy, power, and work of the Spirit of God.

## **CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE OF FAITH**

In order for the Lord to work in our midst, we must develop an attitude of expectancy. God does not respond merely to need, but to faith. This truth is evident from the words of Jesus Himself:

- “According to your faith let it be to you” (Matthew 9:29).
- “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes” (Mark 9:23).
- “And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive” (Matthew 21:22).

Peter explained the role of faith in the healing of a lame man: “And His [Jesus’] name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all” (Acts 3:16). Here, we see that the key to experiencing God’s miraculous work is to have faith in Jesus Christ. In its fullest sense, faith means trust in the Lord and reliance upon Him. Instead of depending upon our abilities, we must depend on God’s. Instead of boasting of our qualifications or accomplishments, we must boast about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

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How do we create an atmosphere of faith? As we have discussed in previous chapters, prayer, preaching, and teaching are vital in this regard. In addition, praise and worship are also important in preparing a congregation for the work of the Spirit.

David described God as inhabiting the praises of His people Israel (Psalm 22:3). David’s praise to God upon his harp dispelled an evil spirit that troubled King Saul (I Samuel 16:23). A musician’s playing created an atmosphere in which “the hand of the Lord came upon” the prophet Elisha so that he received divine instruction in a crisis (II Kings 3:15). When King Jehoshaphat faced a great battle, he appointed singers to

praise God in the beauty of holiness. As “they began to sing and to praise, the LoRD set ambushes against the [enemy] . . . and they were defeated” (II Chronicles 20:22). When Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God, He delivered them from prison by an earthquake (Acts 16:25-26).

Clearly, worship invites the presence and miraculous work of the Lord. When the church gathers together, then, the leader of the service should foster praise and worship. From the very beginning, he should set a positive tone with stirring, energetic praise that focuses on the Lord. Worship can take many forms and have many expressions, but the worship leader should help the congregation implement two essential principles.

1. *Seek the Lord sincerely, diligently, and wholeheartedly.* The leader should conduct the service in such a way that people realize the importance of what they are doing. While worship is frequently joyous, there should always be a seriousness of purpose and an intensity of focus.

2.

The people should understand that if they seek the Lord with all their heart, He will assuredly respond. “Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). “Serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LoRD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you” (I Chronicles 28:9).

The first and greatest commandment is: “Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LoRD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:29-30). From this passage we see that worship should involve our emotions, our personality, our intellect, and our effort.

3. *Worship Him with free and heartfelt expression.* “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Worshiping in spirit refers to the human spirit, including our innermost thoughts and feelings. In short, our worship should be deep, enthusiastic, and in accordance with the truth of God’s Word.

The Bible admonishes, “Do not quench the Spirit” (I Thessalonians 5:19). We must let the Lord work as He wills. When He does, then we can expect great emotional and

spiritual freedom. “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (II Corinthians 3:17).

As Pentecostals often emphasize, worship must go beyond preconception, ritual, and tradition and truly involve the heart. We should consider, however, that there can be Pentecostal rituals and traditions. For instance, some people use certain praise clichés without seriously considering their meaning. Others think that unless they or the congregation have worshiped in a certain physically demonstrative way, then there has not been deep worship or a great move of God.

These ideas are a hindrance to true worship and the freedom of the Spirit. Not every service will be the same, and not every individual will respond in the same way. Some may cry, some laugh, some dance, some leap, some fall on their face before God, and some may simply bask in His presence.

The worship leader’s job is not to elicit a certain form of worship but to facilitate a move of God by encouraging people to worship freely and yield to the Spirit. He should not try to pump up the audience or become a cheerleader. Instead of coercing or rebuking, he should be a positive example of worship that can inspire others. Instead of pressing people to produce a certain response, he needs to create an atmosphere in which people feel free and safe to express themselves in their own way and therefore an atmosphere in which God can move according to His plan for the service.

From the Book of Psalms we see that biblical worship is both individual and corporate, that it is demonstrative, and that it encompasses a variety of expressions. “Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty firmament! Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him according to His excellent greatness! Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; praise Him with the lute and harp! Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes! Praise Him with loud cymbals; praise Him with clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!” (Psalm 150).

Personal testimonies can significantly add to or detract from the service. They provide a means for each person to participate and for the members of the body to minister to each other. (For an expression of these principles with regard to spiritual gifts, see I Corinthians 14:26-31.) To be effective, testimonies should focus on a great work



God has done or an encouraging thought from God's Word. They should be brief, positive, uplifting, and uncontroversial. In some cases, it may be necessary for the leader of the service to select those who will testify or else diplomatically intervene if a testimony seems to head in the wrong direction.

The worship leader is a key person in helping to form a spiritual atmosphere in which the Lord can work freely. For each service at our church, the leader has a brief outline and a selection of songs. He is free to vary from this list as the Lord leads, but he has a plan of action to ensure structure, purpose, and smooth function. The following are guidelines for worship leaders in our church.

### **GUIDELINES FOR WORSHIP LEADERS**

1. Move the service purposefully and progressively.
2. Make quick transitions; avoid dead time.
3. Avoid excessive speaking between elements of the service.
4. Give clear signals to the musicians at all times.
5. When leading songs, keep singing, especially during transitions.
6. Avoid having the people to stand excessively.
7. Testimonies should be quick and positive.
8. Soloists should testify only when asked.
9. Stay in the microphone.
10. Be time conscious. Check with the pastor on when he wants the service.

### **SPECIAL MEETINGS**

Special evangelistic meetings are a good way to build faith. This type of service attracts visitors, gives members a reason to invite their friends and relatives, and creates great expectancy for a move of God. Other special events can do the same, including dramas, gospel concerts, children's revivals, and services geared to special occasions such as Easter, Mother's Day, and Christmas.

A new church or a small church does not have to rely exclusively on its own ability to generate an atmosphere of faith. One of the many benefits of belonging to a fellowship of churches is having rallies, conferences, camps, seminars, and retreats that a local church cannot provide by itself. By participating in these meetings, people have the

benefit of outstanding speakers, music, worship, and fellowship on a large scale.

Every year, many people from our church attend sectional rallies, men's conference, women's conference, youth conference, youth camp, and camp meeting. And every year, we have people to receive the Holy Ghost at them. In the early years of our church, these meetings were an important means of getting people filled with the Spirit. Now, however, the vast majority of our people receive the Holy Ghost in our local church. Nevertheless, there are always some whose faith rises to a new level at such a meeting. In recent years everyone we have brought to the district youth conference, women's conference, and men's conference who did not already have the Holy Ghost has received this gift. Such a great expectation has been created that it is fulfilled through the faith and prayer of the people.

Larger churches sometimes think that they can provide plenty of their own activities and so do not need sectional or district functions. However, if they do not participate, they miss the opportunity to be blessed, to be a blessing, and to be a positive influence for revival elsewhere. When we are kingdom minded, we will seek to promote church growth everywhere and in whatever way that we can, not just in our local church. And even the large church will benefit greatly by its participation. People will be healed, be delivered, receive special answers to prayer, receive confirmations, and rise to new heights of worship, faith, and commitment. For many of our people, these special events have proved to be a life- changing experience, significantly enhancing their spiritual contribution to our assembly.

### **SENSITIVITY TO THE SPIRIT**

In addition to the work of the Holy Spirit in the congregation, the pastor and other leaders need the work of God in their lives and ministries. They should cultivate a personal sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.

Instead of developing clever, intricate, extrabiblical strategies for spiritual warfare and achievement, we must appropriate the victory Jesus has already won for us. Instead of trusting in our background, knowledge, or experience, we must rely upon the work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the risen Lord. Instead of quenching the Spirit, we must yield to the Spirit.

Relying on the Holy Spirit requires humility, brokenness, and yieldedness. Humility is vital in the exercise of all spiritual gifts and abilities. (See Romans 12:3-6.) “Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time” (I Peter 5:5-6). “The LoRD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit” (Psalm 34:18). “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

Humility, brokenness, and yieldedness are important in all aspects of Christian life, but these attributes are particularly vital in allowing God’s Spirit to work through us. We should be neither proud nor self-rejecting, but simply unconscious of self. We need a hunger for the things of God and a sincere love for the kingdom of God. We must repent of sin and pursue holiness, asking the Lord to reveal and remove secret impurities in our life. We should periodically evaluate and purge our motives. We should develop a habit of prayer and a continual attitude of prayer. Self-discipline and self-denial should become guiding principles of our life, and fasting is an important practice in this regard.

We cannot earn favors from God through spiritual efforts, but these attitudes and disciplines will help minimize worldly influences and maximize godly influences. As we lay aside selfish desires and fleshly lusts, we will become more sensitive and open to the things of God.

Learning to walk by faith and to yield to the Spirit is a process. We grow in grace and knowledge (II Peter 3:18). It is not difficult to allow God to work through us, but it does take mental, emotional, and spiritual adjustments. We must lay aside fear and doubt and let the Spirit flow through us.

As we learn to yield to the Spirit, it is important to act in faith. For example, we may feel a prompting to speak or pray with someone but not be sure it is from God. If what we are feeling is consistent with the Word of God and with the principle of love, then we should act on it. If the prompting is indeed from God, once we act we will feel a confirmation, and often we will see miraculous results. In the process, we learn to discern the leading of God’s Spirit so that we will be more confident the next time it happens.

God “is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” (Ephesians 3:20). We who are filled with the Holy Spirit need to recognize the supernatural potential that rests in us and allow God’s Spirit to flow through us. Our God is not distant; He is present in our lives with miraculous power. When we have the Holy Spirit, we have the author of all nine spiritual gifts resident within us, and He can activate any that we need.

Let us exercise simple faith to receive God’s miraculous gifts, and let us stir up the gifts He has already placed in our midst. Whenever needs arise, we should believe His Word and believe that He can work through us. His power is at work “in us”; we must let it flow through us to meet the needs.

### **WISDOM AND LEADING OF THE SPIRIT**

Spiritual leaders specifically need divine wisdom in making decisions and guiding people. They need divine leading in many situations.

In counseling and guiding people, I rely heavily upon James 1:5: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” When faced with a decision, a counseling session, or a problem, I have learned to go to the Lord in prayer. Sometimes I pray inwardly while dealing with a situation outwardly.

Several years ago, a man visited our church after noticing our sign as he drove by. He became very interested in the Lord and began to come regularly, but his wife was not interested. One day, the two of them came to me for counseling. His concern was that his wife did not<sup>76</sup> want to attend church with him; he thought that she should follow his leadership. She said that it was fine for him to attend if he desired, but she was satisfied with her own religious tradition, did not particularly like our style of worship, and saw no reason to come regularly.

As usual, we had prayed at the beginning of our meeting, and I continued to seek the Lord mentally while we talked. The Lord must have prompted me to speak at this point, for there was no objective reason for me to say what I did. I told the husband, “Of course, I want your wife to come to church with you.

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However, I think you should stop putting pressure on her. God is already dealing with her, and she has a hunger for Him. If we will leave her alone, God will draw her.”

When I said this, the wife immediately began crying. She confessed that she was very dissatisfied with her spiritual life and that God had been dealing with her. Her husband stared at her in shock, for he had no inkling that she had any desire for God.

She began attending church regularly after that. Before long, the husband, the wife, and their teenage daughter all received the Holy Spirit. In fact, the wife and the daughter received the Spirit one night before the husband, whereupon the wife called to him as they left the service, “Come on, heathen! It’s time to go home.” She was definitely converted! This conversion did not come about by human wisdom but by the intervention of God.

One young woman who came to our church had been addicted to alcohol and drugs and had spent four years under psychiatric care. When she first came, she sat on the very back row in a corner and avoided contact with people. At the altar call, however, she moved closer to the front, evidently interested in what was taking place. I approached her and asked if she wanted to see what was happening. She said yes, so I led her to the altar area. After a few minutes, I asked if she wanted what the people were experiencing. Again she said yes, so I suggested, “Let’s pray.” She replied, “I don’t know how.” I told her to listen to me as I prayed a prayer of repentance. Then I asked her to pray the same way in her own words.

Soon she was shaking under the power of God, but she could not seem to open her heart to receive the Holy Spirit. After a time of explanation and further prayer, I finally told her that she was at the point of receiving the Spirit; when she decided to move beyond fear and into faith, she would be filled. I stated that it could happen anywhere at any time—such as at night in her bedroom—whenever she opened her heart in faith and praise.

The next day on her job, she began to think about what I had said, and she made up her mind to receive the Holy Ghost. She took her midmorning break and went into the ladies’ restroom, where there was a small couch and where she knew she would not be disturbed. She knelt down, opened her heart, and received the gift of the

Holy Ghost right there. After all, I had said “anywhere”! The experience was so wonderful that, as she later reported to me, “At lunch, I went back to the same place and got it again!”

## ANOINTING

In addition to divine wisdom, pastors and other leaders need divine anointing to do their work and accomplish their objectives. They should seek God for anointing to lead worship, preach, teach, pray with people, and operate gifts of the Spirit. In some situations, they need to exercise spiritual authority and claim divine intervention.

A woman came into our church with a glorious experience of receiving the Holy Spirit. However, her husband was quite hostile. He was tormented by evil spirits to the point that he had made cuts on his arms, legs, and hand and even contemplated suicide. Ironically, after reading a negative evaluation of the Pentecostal message by some evangelicals, he concluded that our church was a cult and wanted his family to have no part of it. He finally agreed, however, to meet me in my office to discuss matters.

In our meeting, he acknowledged that he was depressed, frustrated, and tormented, so I began to pray for the peace of God. Immediately, the Spirit of the Lord ministered to him, and by the end of our meeting his attitude had completely changed. He began attending church, but several weeks later at the end of a service I noticed him standing alone in a far corner of the sanctuary while everyone else was praying. He was obviously upset and troubled, so I went to him and began to talk. He was confused about what to believe, so I answered his questions and prayed with him. Again, the peace of God came upon him.

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A few weeks later, he came to the front of the church to pray and began to repent. The power of God moved upon him greatly, but suddenly he stopped praying and erected a spiritual wall. Nevertheless, we continued to lift him up in prayer. A few services later, the Spirit of God moved powerfully. The congregation worshiped with great freedom and demonstration, and several people began praying with this man. After an extended time of worship, I felt that I should preach for a short while, but I told those who were still seeking victory to go to the prayer room and continue praying. Two men took this man into the prayer room, where the Spirit of God came down in a mighty way. He fell to his knees under the power of God, lifted up his hands, was delivered from demonic forces, and

instantly received the Holy Ghost.

The battle was not over, however. After a month, the pressures of life began closing in on him again, and I could tell that he was struggling. At the close of a service I went to pray with him, but he responded angrily, “I don’t want to pray. In fact, I don’t even believe your doctrine, because you think that every- one who does not speak in tongues is going to hell.” I quietly answered that we did not try to judge the hearts of people, but we simply tried to follow the Scriptures. Moreover, he did not have to agree with everything we taught in order to come to church and be blessed of God. Indeed, I told him that the real issue at hand was not doctrine but struggles in his personal life and the attack of the devil. Eventually, he agreed to let me lay hands upon him and pray. When I did, his heart began to melt. I instructed sev- eral men to continue praying and talking with him until he opened his heart to the Lord again.

Some weeks later, we were in the midst of another exciting, demonstrative service when suddenly someone began to speak forcefully in tongues. The message was unusually anointed and powerful, and an interpretation soon followed. I was amazed and thrilled to see that the man who had experienced such a struggle was the one who gave the message in tongues. This miracle was a tremendous boost to his spiritual confidence. From that day forward, he had assurance that God loved him, accepted him, and would use him in His kingdom. By his own public testimony, he is no longer on psychiatric medication, “no longer crazy, and no longer psyched out,” but zealous for God.

Sometimes, there is no substitute for a prayer of authority—not a self-proclaimed or self-generated authority but authority from God. Frequently, people face situations in which they need someone to take spiritual authority by a prayer of faith. As pastor, sometimes I feel led of the Spirit to pray for some- one in an authoritative way—rebuking the attack of the devil, proclaiming deliverance, claiming healing, or claiming the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Many times I have seen people instantly delivered, healed, or filled with the Holy Ghost as we prayed the prayer of faith.

This work does not take place merely by our wish- ing it to happen or trying to make it happen by “con- fessing it,” “naming and claiming it,” or “speaking it.” The unction must come from God, and the person must respond in faith. For instance, while Paul was preaching in Lystra, he noticed a lame man and called out to him, “Stand up straight on your feet” (Acts 14:10). Instantly the man was healed. Paul did not speak merely from

a human whim, hope, desire, or plan, however. Rather, after “observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed,” he spoke with spiritual authority (Acts 14:9). And Paul’s spiritual perception in this case was undoubtedly an impartation from God Himself.

## **EXPECTING THE MIRACULOUS**

In short, to see apostolic church growth, we must cultivate an expectation of the miraculous. The leadership and the congregation need to believe that nothing is impossible with God. He can and will save people to the uttermost, regardless of background, past life of sin, evil habits, or addictions. He can heal all diseases, even when the doctor says there is no hope. He can salvage and restore marriages, even when the family counselor recommends divorce. When a church develops this expectation, they will see the Lord do amazing things. Their faith will grow as they see God’s mighty works, and more faith will in turn lead to more miracles.

Our assembly has seen so many miraculous conversions that they now believe literally anyone can be saved. People in our congregation have come to the Lord and received the Holy Spirit from a wide variety of religious backgrounds, including Protestant, Catholic, Mormon, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Buddhist, Muslim, no religion, agnostic, and atheist. A variety of professions and occupations have been represented among our converts, including businessman, college professor, college student, computer programmer, construction worker, corporate executive, denominational preacher, engineer, housewife, lawyer, mechanic, prisoner, prison security chief, former prostitute, salesman, and unemployed homeless. In our church are people who formerly were involved in serious crimes, abortion, sexual promiscuity, witchcraft, adultery, homosexuality, alcohol addiction, drug addiction, and attempted suicide. Among our converts and members are some who grew up<sup>80</sup> with little parental care, had half a dozen stepparents, were repeatedly abused sexually as children, were severely abused physically by a spouse, lived on the streets for a significant time, or were committed to a mental institution. Our congregation has included people from eighteen nations on five continents—Albania, Canada, Chile, El Salvador, Germany, Czech Republic, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Korea, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Panama, Philippines, Poland, United Kingdom, and of course the United States. Marriages have been restored after adulterous affairs, and divorced couples have been reunited. We have literally seen God save people from all walks of life, from the up-and-outers to the down-and-outers. The following are some examples.



*Salvation of an entire family.* A woman received the Holy Ghost and was delivered from alcoholism. That same week her husband said he wanted a divorce, and her daughter attempted suicide. I told her to hold on to God, to pray for her family, and to believe God for a miracle. Over time, God worked miraculously in her family. Through much prayer and counsel, today the husband, wife, and children are all serving the Lord, and they have won others to the Lord also.

*Salvation of a marriage.* A young couple who were our converts came to a crisis in their marriage, with the husband on the verge of leaving his family. The wife called me in the middle of the night in desperation. I urged her to pray for God to intervene, and in the next few days I told her to bind together with family members and close friends to believe God for a miracle.

During that time, I met with the husband and counseled with him regarding his future. He had had a very difficult childhood and home life, he had developed detrimental patterns of behavior, and before coming to God the couple had begun their relationship on a faulty foundation amid much conflict. Through prayer and counsel from the Word of God, I showed him that it was not God's will for him to leave his wife. At this point, however, he said, "It would take a miracle to change my heart." I assured him that if he truly wanted to do God's will and would make the right choice, God would work a miracle, transform his emotions, and restore his feelings and relationship with his wife. For a few days, he weighed his decision, and those who knew the situation prayed intensely.

God did intervene in a miraculous way, breaking the man's spirit and bestowing great grace upon him. His relationship with God was fully restored, and so was his relationship with his wife. While counseling and communication were an important part of the restoration, the <sup>81</sup>key was not human ability but the supernatural power of God.

*Healing of digestive system.* One Sunday night after church had begun, I received a message that one of our men had been rushed into emergency surgery, and the prognosis was not favorable. I turned over the service to our assistant pastor, asking him to lead a prayer meeting while my wife and I hurried to the hospital.

At the hospital, the surgeon explained that a blood clot had cut off circulation to the man's intestines and gangrene had already set in. His only hope was immediate surgery to take out ninety percent of his intestines. The doctor said the man had about a fifty-percent

chance of surviving the operation, and if he lived, for the next week he would be at great risk of fatal infection. Moreover, he would have to be fed intravenously for the rest of his life.

The church continued to pray. As my wife and I prayed in the hospital room with the family, tongues and interpretation came forth. The message from God was one of assurance and victory.

The man survived the surgery and the subsequent week. The doctor later inserted a permanent feeding tube into a blood vessel so that the man could receive a costly liquid diet called TPN (total parenteral nutrition) for about twelve hours per day. He could eat some solid food but could not derive any nutritional value from it.

Some months later, an infection set in where the tube was attached, and the TPN had to be stopped until the infection could be cured. To the surprise of his doctor, the man continued to thrive without TPN, actually gaining weight. The doctor finally decided to discontinue the liquid nutrition altogether, and today, despite losing most of his digestive system, the man is completely sustained by solid food.

*Healing after a brain tumor.* A young couple came to our church off and on for several years. They had been baptized and had received the Spirit, but they did not remain faithful to church, and they had significant family difficulties. One day, however, they came with the report that their young daughter had a brain tumor. It had displaced part of her brain and was affecting her ability to walk. They began to seek God with all their heart, and the church began to pray for a miracle. The doctors performed surgery and removed the tumor but were concerned about a possible recurrence. Soon after the surgery, they conducted a brain scan. To their amazement, not only was there no new tumor, but the brain had almost immediately filled the space left by the old tumor—a medical miracle. The doctors reported that it appeared as if the girl had never had a tumor or surgery at all!

This healing proved to be a turning point in the life of the couple. Soon they were renewed in the Holy Ghost, and their daughter also received the Holy Ghost. Since that time, they have won eight adults to the Lord, and they are still witnessing to family and friends.

*Healing after a gunshot wound to the brain.* In a family who had visited our church, a teenage son attempted suicide by shooting himself in the forehead one night. His mother found him the next morning in bed, unconscious but alive. He was rushed to the hospital, where the doctor did not give much hope. The immediate concern was that the brain would swell, creating so much pressure that the boy would soon die.

Sure enough, the brain did swell until the doctor said that either he had to perform emergency surgery and remove part of the brain or else the boy would surely die. If he performed the surgery, however, the boy would have some permanent brain damage with unforeseeable consequences. After prayer and counsel, the mother decided not to risk the surgery but to leave the boy in the hands of God. We called upon the church for concentrated prayer.

Soon, to the amazement of the doctors, the swelling began to subside, and the boy fully recovered, albeit with the loss of one eye where the bullet had entered. The doctors could not understand how he had survived because the pressure on the brain had been far more than enough to kill him, and it had remained for a significant amount of time. Finally, they concluded that the instrument used to measure the pressure must have been faulty. But we knew that it was a miracle for the boy to survive a close-range gunshot wound to the brain.

*Summary.* Miracles such as these have helped lead people to the Lord and establish them in the church. In addition, such miracles have inspired the entire congregation to believe for the supernatural intervention of God in their lives and the lives of others. And of course, they are eager to share their faith with family and friends, offering them hope for their own needs. In this way, miracles spur church growth, making an impact that extends far beyond the individuals who receive them.

As we discussed in chapter 3, in a new church or a new pastorate it will take time to mold the congregation so that there is a continual atmosphere of faith, worship, and revival. Yet this should be our goal, and it is a goal that we can and must achieve through persistent prayer, preaching and teaching, worship, and personal sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.

The supernatural work of God does not come by our pursuing miracles but by our pursuing a relationship with Him and trusting Him to supply every need. When we fulfill the greatest commandment of all—to worship and love God with all our being—then mir-

acles will become a regular occurrence. At the same time, we also need to fulfill the second-greatest commandment, which is closely associated with the first:

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31). This commandment leads us to the sixth principle of church growth—personal care.

## CHAPTER SIX

### PERSONAL CARE

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*The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock (I Peter 5:1-3).*

**W**hen the apostle Peter admonished the elders of the church, he enunciated some important principles of spiritual leadership: (1) Spiritual leaders are to serve willingly, not because they are compelled to do so. (2) They are to serve eagerly, not out of greed. (3) They are to be examples, not lording it over the church. In all these instructions, we see that leaders are supposed to care for people as a shepherd does for his sheep. They are to be good stewards of those whom God has entrusted to their care.

Jesus explained that leadership in the church is different from that of the world. Rather than leaders asserting authority in order to compel obedience, they serve people in order to encourage imitation of their example. “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over<sup>85</sup> them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28). In short, we lead by serving others, and that service presupposes love, respect, and personal care.

Indeed, love, respect, and care for people are basic principles of Christian living, and as such they are essential to effective leadership and church growth. Jesus taught that the second-greatest commandment, right after the commandment to love God, is to love

our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:31). He further taught that we should treat others as we ourselves wish to be treated, or what is often called the Golden Rule: “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

### **THE EXAMPLE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL**

The apostle Paul provides a great example of Christian leadership, as we see in I Thessalonians 2:1-12: “For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict. For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”

From this passage<sup>86</sup>, we can identify the following characteristics of Paul’s pastoral ministry:

- A. Holy boldness (despite opposition), verses 1-2
- B. Honesty and integrity, verse 3
- C. Stewardship of God’s gospel, verses 4-6
  - 1. Speaking to please God, not people
  - 2. Not using flattery
  - 3. Not greedy or seeking self-gratification
  - 4. Not using authority to seek glory or self-exaltation

D. Stewardship of God's people, verses 7-9

1. Gentleness: bold yet caring, speaking the truth yet in love
2. Nurturing, cherishing: like a mother nursing a child
3. Affection, longing
4. Devotion of life for others, servanthood
5. Labor, not wanting to be a burden to others

E. Christian example, verses 10-12

1. Devotion to God
2. Righteousness
3. Blamelessness
4. Exhortation
5. Comfort
6. Fatherhood

Paul's great love for people shines through these verses. His personal care for them could only be compared to the combined service of both a father and a mother. He was willing to labor for them and even to give his life for them, but not to compromise truth in order to please them. He respected them so much that he would never seek to motivate them by deceit or flattery, nor would he ever take advantage of his position for personal gain or glory.

Under divine inspiration, Paul described the qualities of true love, especially in the context of Christian ministry and service: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails" (I Corinthians 13:4-8, NIV).

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## **LOVE FOR PEOPLE**

These teachings of Scripture as well as personal observation and experience over the years have convinced me that growing a great church does not require exceptional ability as much as care for people. Some of the greatest pastors I have observed were not noted for extraordinary eloquence, intellect, spiritual gifts, or talent—although they did have ability in these areas—but they loved people. When they spoke with someone, they made the individual feel like the most important person in the world to them at that time—and he or she was. When people were in need, they were there to minister, pray, counsel, listen, laugh, or cry. In short, they loved people.

People in our world are starving for love. It is amazing how many people have suffered various forms of abuse and rejection, and they need someone who cares. Many people have been hurt by authority figures, including ministers, and they want to find out if a pastor and church will truly love them before they make a commitment.

One thing that I did not anticipate when I started a church was how many wounded people I would meet, including people who had been wounded in churches. Soon it became evident that one of the main emphases of our ministry would be healing—healing of wounded spirits, broken hearts, and troubled emotions.

Probably the most amazing discovery that I have made as a pastor is how many people carry wounds from events that occurred years ago and how strongly these hurts can still influence their thoughts and actions today. Of course, the grace of God can deliver people from their past, but to receive His miraculous work they must have faith. They most often develop that faith, along with hope and trust, when someone shows them unconditional, unfeigned, selfless love over a period of time. All people, and especially hurting people, need leaders who will love them with the qualities in I Corinthians 13.

Our assembly has ministered to many people who have suffered from child abuse, spousal abuse, divorce, or bad relationships. Moreover, since society has strayed so far from Christian principles, most of the people we win to the Lord today have already made many sinful choices in life and are suffering the consequences.

We have also ministered to many people who have suffered spiritual neglect or abuse. Some people were hurt by ministers who compromised truth, and some were hurt by ministers who used spiritual authority as a weapon to enforce their will. One man who visited our church had encountered both situations. He told me, “I don’t want to join your church, but I just want to observe for a while.” I assured him that my goal was to minister to people, not to convince them to join a church, and in fact, I would not immediately enroll anyone as a voting member. I told him to take whatever time he needed to decide whether our ministry was of God and whether I was the kind of pastor he would follow. He later became one of our most faithful members and eventually served on our church board.

In the long term, love cannot be successfully programmed or feigned. In the short term, mere professions of love may satisfy people, but eventually they discern whether



a leader truly loves them or not. A person's love, or lack of love, will be revealed in unguarded or unselfconscious moments by casual words, gestures, and small events.

One man who visited our church later told what made him decide that I would be a good pastor. While I was talking with an adult, a boy came up to me and sought my attention. Continuing my conversation, I put my arms around the boy, hugged him, and kept him close until I had an opportunity to talk with him. This minor incident convinced the man that I was a pastor who cared for people. When he related this event much later, I did not recall it.

In the beginning of our church, my wife and I purposed to spend quality time with each new family or single adult—visiting their home, inviting them to our home, meeting them for lunch, or counseling them in a time of need. After the first two years, however, the growth of the church began to exceed our ability to keep up with this level of personal contact. Nevertheless, we still try to do as much of it as possible. We usually do not visit people's homes unless they request it, but we try to stay in personal contact with everyone through visits at church, telephone calls, personal notes, and making ourselves available in time of need.

Now our primary goal is to have close personal involvement with our leaders, particularly ministers, ministers in training, daughter work pastors, department heads, board members, and care group leaders, along with their spouses. As much as possible, we try to meet with these leaders individually and in groups for personal interaction, coordination of efforts, training, and fellowship. While these groups overlap, together they represent about seventy-five adults—a congregation within itself.

In the first few years of the church, we sent birthday and anniversary cards to everyone in regular attendance, and we always included a personal message. With the increase in attendance, we have been forced to delegate this task to our care groups, but we still ask that they include our names on the cards. Over the years, many people have been blessed by these cards, especially children and newcomers. Even now we receive comments of appreciation for this small gesture.

For the first five years of our church, my wife and I were closely connected to everyone in our church. In almost every case, the determining factor in someone's becoming part of our church or staying in our church was this personal connection. We were the ones

who gave people home Bible studies, repeatedly contacted them about coming to church, prayed with them to receive the Holy Ghost, counseled them through a crisis, or established them through personal fellowship.

After our regular weekly attendance began to exceed 150, this situation began to change. Now, many have entered the church and have become established primarily through the efforts of other people.

This transition is necessary if a church is to continue growing. But in order for the transition to be successful the pastor must work hard to convey his or her love and burden to the leadership and to the entire congregation. My wife and I have sought to do so through personal example, practical preaching and teaching, and intensive training. I have taught our people to welcome everyone, to be genuinely friendly, and to show love regardless of someone's background, appearance, or life of sin.

To this end, I teach and preach strongly against all forms of prejudice, for the Bible proclaims that it is sinful. (See James 2:1-9.) My oftstated goal is for everyone who enters our church to feel welcome, feel the presence of the Lord, and feel that they could easily become a participating member of our church. I also teach strongly against judgmental attitudes, whether expressed verbally or nonverbally. I want sinners to come to church, because that is where they can hear the gospel of salvation. And I want them to feel comfortable in church, for then they will be open to hear, respond, and return. I do not apologize if the Holy Spirit convicts them, but I do not want anyone to condemn them. I sometimes tell our people that I always want to see people in our congregation who do not adhere to our teachings regarding outward adornment—only not the same people always! The reason is that a revival church should always have visitors and new converts. Not only that, but it helps for a first-time visitor to see someone else in the congregation with whom he or she can identify.

Even though in recent years many people have become part of our church without the direct intervention of my wife and me, we still seek to bond personally with newcomers. To a great extent, this bonding takes place through public ministry, personal contact at church, praying with people at the altar, visiting Sunday school classes, and participating in various small group meetings. Fellowship times are also important, such as church socials and outings; trips with the youth, men, or women; socials with various departments and classes; and recreational events. Informal times of social

interaction help cement the personal connections.

Eventually, all come to a time of significant need when the pastor has the opportunity to truly become their pastor emotionally and spiritually. This may take place by the pastor's praying with them about an urgent problem, counseling them in a crisis, helping them find the will of God for an important decision, visiting them in the hospital, attending court with them, or ministering to their close friend or loved one. The pastor must rise to such occasions out of genuine love and care for people, while also realizing that God uses times like these to guide families by the shepherd He has given them. The conversion process itself is often the key time for new converts, but the bonding process is also important for those who have already known the Lord under another pastor.

Love means being a channel of God's grace and mercy. Leaders must proclaim and model God's forgiveness. Sinners who repent—whether new converts, backsliders, or members who fall into sin—all need to experience acceptance, a second chance, and a new beginning. While they do not immediately qualify for leadership roles, they need assurance that both God and the church value them and that there is a place of service for them in God's kingdom.

### **AVAILABILITY**

Showing love requires individual attention and time—both in quantity and in quality. Leaders must be available to people when they need help. I try to make myself available as follows:

1. On Tuesday through Friday, I keep regular, announced office hours when I am generally available by telephone or by appointment, except when I am out of town, meeting with someone, making visits outside the office, or working on a project. In these cases, my secretary, who answers all calls, takes a message, and I return the call as soon as possible.
2. I schedule appointments in the evenings and on weekends for people who cannot see me during the week.
3. After church services, I am available for brief, informal discussions, which can often replace the need for an office appointment.

4. People are welcome to call me at other times, but I announce that they should not call before 9:00 Am or after 10:00 Pm except for emergencies. Of course, in case of true emergencies, I am on call twenty-four hours.
5. We have answering machines at church and at home, and I return calls promptly.

Through these methods, I demonstrate practical concern for people, allocate time to minister to needs, and yet protect time for myself and my family. Since people know that I am readily available, they generally do not call on my day off (Monday), early in the morning, or late at night.

Being available has made a difference. Some people have come to our church because after they contacted several churches we were the only one to answer or return their call. Many people are amazed that the pastor is readily available, and just knowing that I am accessible is an important encouragement to them. Moreover, through early and quick communication, I am usually able to deal with personal, family, and interpersonal problems while they are small, before they become disastrous.

As the church has grown, I have had to manage my time carefully to maintain my availability. From the beginning, I asked our people to accept a call or visit from my wife, our assistant pastor, or other leaders as a visit from me. Thus, I can alternate with them in making contacts and extend my reach. In addition, my secretary and my wife screen calls to ensure that I handle only those that someone else cannot.

The pastor must make time for counseling people. The need for counseling can be greatly reduced by a good discipleship program for converts, a well-balanced schedule of preaching and teaching, a ministry of deliverance in the power of the Spirit, and informal conversations after church. Nevertheless, there are times when people need individual guidance and direction from their pastor.

Here are common situations in which people need pastoral counseling: overcoming habits of sin, changing poor patterns of behavior, contemplating marriage, major illness, facing death of self or loved one, interpersonal conflict, marital difficulty, family crisis, financial crisis, facing an important decision with spiritual consequences, making a significant consecration, seeking greater church involvement, or exploring a call to ministry.

I explain to people that I am a pastor, not a professional counselor. I offer prayer, biblical principles, and experience in dealing with people. For specific needs, such as preparation for marriage, financial difficulty, marital conflict, and dealing with abuse, I also provide books on the subject from a Christian perspective. Sometimes, I ask another minister on staff to help with initial or follow-up counseling in these areas. In most situations, if people really desire God's will for their lives, I can help them find direction for their problem, and they begin to see immediate improvement if they act on my recommendations. If they seem to require extensive, repeated counseling, I refer them to Christian-oriented counselors who have training and expertise in the area of their need. We are in the process of developing a network of such counselors within our church.

### **RESPECT FOR PEOPLE**

To minister effectively to people, we must respect them. Many church problems arise simply because leaders do not treat people with common courtesy and respect, the way they themselves expect to be treated. For instance, they may rebuke someone from the pulpit, either by name or by describing a situation known to the congregation. Others will scold the congregation as a whole or speak against other ministers and churches. Such actions rarely solve a problem but often wound and alienate people, reducing the leader's ability to influence them. Over time, this style of leadership drives people away.

Instead, the leader should be kind, gentle, and loving, especially when administering needed correction. Individual correction should be done privately. General correction for the congregation should be done by appealing to Scripture. Having a position of authority does not give someone the right to be disrespectful, rude, or cruel. Instead, it requires a higher level of patience and love. "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all,<sup>93</sup> able to teach, patient" (II Timothy 2:24). The following are some practical ways to show respect to people.

*Follow the Golden Rule.* How do we as leaders like to be addressed? How do we wish for others to treat our private matters? How do we like for a mentor, organizational official, or neighboring pastor to handle a situation involving us? We should treat others the same way.

*Live by the same principles that we expect others to live by.* For instance, I teach that people should pay tithes; therefore, I pay tithes. I teach that everyone should be

accountable and submissive to spiritual leadership; therefore, I do the same. I want people to cooperate with our church's activities; therefore, I cooperate with sectional and district functions and do not speak disparagingly of our organization. I ask people to inform me when they need to be absent from church; therefore, I announce when I have to miss a scheduled service due to other obligations.

*Be accountable to spiritual authority, to peers, and to the congregation.* As a pastor, I look to my district superintendent, my father (whom I consider to be my pastor), and other mentors for guidance. While they do not control my ministry, I turn to them for advice at crucial times, and if they express a question, concern, or warning, then I carefully heed what they say. I also have several ministerial friends and associates from whom I seek input and advice from time to time. They also have the right to express concerns to me, in which case I want to consider their viewpoint very carefully.

Finally, I make myself accountable to the church by reporting to the church board and congregation, both informally and formally, particularly in matters of finance, business, and church administration. Neither the congregation nor the board has the right to control my ministry, but I want to be transparently honest, "providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (II Corinthians 8:21). (See also Romans 12:17.) Not only that, but I need their support to fulfill my vision for the church. Thus, they need to understand my vision and have confidence in my efforts. If I am not successful in building support through open communication and sharing of my burden, then I would be foolish to impose my will on the church anyway.

*Preach and teach a positive, encouraging, faith-building message with sensitivity.* (See chapter 4.) When dealing with issues that can evoke strong emotions, I try to be sensitive to the diversity in the congregation. For example, when we talk about homosexuality, suicide, abortion, or divorce, it is likely that someone in the audience has been personally affected by wrong choices in this area. While we cannot compromise the truth in order to spare feelings, we can offer appropriate encouragement. For instance, if I am teaching against homosexual behavior, I emphasize that we are to treat homosexuals with the same respect and friendship that we offer to anyone else. We can still show love and acceptance of them as humans without granting approval of the sin.

When teaching against the sin of divorce, I may say, "God's plan is for husband and wife to be married for life. Divorce is never God's original intention for a marriage, but it is

always the result of sin. Therefore, there should be no reason for two committed Christians to get a divorce. However, some circumstances make divorce the lesser of two evils—such as when a spouse adopts a sexually immoral lifestyle or when there is a pattern of physical abuse of a spouse or a child. If you have suffered a divorce because of the sinful choice of someone else, God still has a plan for your life, and He can make you whole. Even if you have made wrong choices, there is forgiveness and a new beginning. While recognizing the grace of God, however, let us not compromise the teaching of Scripture. Give me the privilege of teaching our youth and young married couples the will of God for their lives.”

*Maintain confidentiality.* When something is shared in confidence, then that confidence must be respected. Even when people do not explicitly ask that a matter be kept confidential, if it is of a personal nature that would potentially be embarrassing or hurtful if shared with others, then confidentiality should still be assumed. It is wrong to divulge a personal matter to someone else without permission and even worse to mention it from the pulpit. Even if the speaker does not specifically identify anyone, it is not fair to cause anxiety in this way.

There are some qualifications to confidentiality, however. No one in the church should give an unconditional promise of confidentiality in such a way as to exclude the pastor from helping with a problem. Staff members should reserve the right to share a serious situation with the pastor. At the least, church members should not make any promise that would prevent them from telling the pastor, “I think you need to talk with so-and-so; they have a serious problem,” even if they do not divulge the nature of the problem. Moreover, in my own counseling, I reserve the right to report instances of child abuse to the appropriate authorities, as required by law.

*Respect people's right to make decisions for their own lives.* It is tempting to exercise maximum authority in order to compel people to make right choices. This approach, however, violates the freedom of will that God has given each of us, and it does not produce mature Christians. It is significant that God Himself allowed Adam and Eve a choice in the Garden of Eden. He gave them abundant blessings, told them what was right, and warned them not to do what was wrong, but He did not coerce or intimidate them. Nor did He insulate them from all possible temptation—He allowed both the tree of knowledge of good and evil to remain in the garden and the devil himself to enter the garden.

Many new converts are eager to comply with everything we tell them, but we



should not take advantage of this willingness to maneuver them into decisions that they do not understand. They may conform in the short run, but soon their family and friends will start challenging their new decisions, and if they do not have personal convictions, in a few months they are likely to fall away completely. It is better to inform and guide them and to give them time to make personal consecrations. Then they will stand firm on these beliefs and decisions for a lifetime.

Both in teaching and counseling, I communicate respect for personal decisions. If a scriptural principle is involved, then I strongly affirm the necessity of following it, but in areas of individual and family preferences I avoid dogmatism and authoritarianism.

For instance, based on I Timothy 2:9, I Peter 3:3, I John 2:15-17, and other passages, I teach that it is not God's will for Christians to wear ornamental jewelry, and since that is a clear biblical teaching, I incorporate it as part of our guidelines for leadership and public ministry. But how does this teaching apply to wedding rings? As a personal consecration and to avoid any hint of inconsistency, my wife and I do not wear wedding rings, and this is my preference for other leaders. However, some people feel strongly that they should wear wedding rings, not for ornamentation but as a visible sign of their marital commitment. As a pastor, I have decided that this is an area of Christian liberty. If they agree with the scriptural principle of not using jewelry for personal ornamentation, then I respect their use of wedding rings for a strong symbolic purpose.

Romans 14 tells us that we should allow liberty in areas that do not involve morality or scriptural teaching. I teach our people to respect one another's convictions without judgment or ridicule, and I promise to do the same. Thus, some in our church do not have Christmas trees in their home because they feel that the pagan associations are too strong. A few do not eat meat or limit their intake of meat for reasons of health and Christian stewardship. A few men have facial hair out of long-standing personal choice but not out of rebellion or pride. In short, I teach all to adhere to the principles of Scripture and to the church's standards based on those principles, but in other matters they should respect differences of personal conviction and practice.

When I counsel people regarding a personal decision, I refuse to make it for them. I share scriptural principles, warn of spiritual dangers, and oppose anything unscriptural, but I give them the freedom and responsibility of making their own decisions. For instance,



if a believer is thinking about dating or marrying an unbeliever, then I oppose it on the basis of II Corinthians 6:14. If a couple in the church is contemplating marriage and I have reservations based on their immaturity, incompatibility, lack of consecration, and so on, then I advise them accordingly. Indeed, I ask all couples who are considering engagement to work through *Getting Ready for Marriage Workbook* by Jerry Hardin and Dianne Sloan as a means of identifying and possibly correcting such problems. In the end, however, if the couple does get engaged, I do not pronounce the judgment of God upon them, but I continue to work with them and promise to help them in their married life.

I treat their decision as unwise but not rebellious, because my pastoral authority is limited to the Word of God. When people persist in violating God's Word, I have the authority to tell them that they are rebellious—but even then I try to maintain a relationship with them so that I can continue to minister to them and salvage their souls. When someone makes a spiritually unwise decision contrary to my advice, I do not cast them out of the church, but I continue to assist them as much as possible. In many cases, through loving, patient pastoral influence they will come to a better understanding and make a better decision or, if that is no longer possible, at least mitigate the damage of their previous decision. Since God is merciful, we can help them in spite of their poor judgment.

*Handle transfers and losses with grace.* When people approach me about moving to another city or transferring to another church, I explain that ultimately this will be their decision and I will not impose my wishes upon theirs. Then I try to analyze the situation objectively, discussing the pros and cons of the move, pointing out any spiritual dangers involved, and highlighting the benefits to them of staying. More than stressing how much the church needs them, I discuss what the church means to them and their family, because I want my advice to be motivated by their well-being, not my self-interest. If they are troubled by a particular problem, I explain that running from the problem will not solve it; instead, they need to face it, overcome it, and learn from it. Nevertheless, I recognize that there are valid reasons for a move or transfer, such as marriage, job situation, and commuting distance.

In any case, I pray with them for God's will without authoritatively pronouncing it to them. I want them to discern God's will for themselves and to stay because they are personally convinced that God wants them to do so. If they stay out of pressure or

coercion, they will likely develop a disgruntled attitude, negatively affect others in the church, and eventually leave anyway.

By my handling the situation in this way, many times people decide not to move or transfer, but if they do, I send them with the blessing of the church. When people move out of town, I ask to lay hands on them and pray for them in front of the congregation, especially if they are leaving for involvement in ministry. Even in the case of a transfer to another church in the area, I usually make a brief, positive explanation to our members, saying that for personal reasons the family is leaving, or they feel it in the will of God to do so at this time. I also assure the family that if things do not work out as planned, they are welcome to return, and in a few cases they have done so.

Creating an atmosphere of respect and freedom actually causes most people to stay. Even if there are problems, they usually make a commitment to work out those problems. A number of people in our church have received wonderful job offers elsewhere but refused them, or received mandatory job transfers but commuted for a while or even obtained a different job in order to remain in our congregation. I never ask for this but allow people to make their own decisions.

When people do leave despite my reservations, I let them leave with dignity and a positive feeling. If they are out of God's will, I want to be available to help them if they come to realize their error, and that means we need to part with respect. I also realize that, for whatever reason, I cannot minister effectively to everyone. If they go somewhere else, perhaps the Lord can lead them to a church and pastor that will be effective in helping them.

Sometimes a loss, while painful, may be in the best interests of the church. Although I never want people to leave, I sometimes see the hand of God at work in moving people to another place where they do not hinder our church and where they can possibly help another church. In a very few cases, people have created such confusion, contention, or disruption that I have asked them either to change their attitude and conform to some specific guidelines and restrictions that I give them, or else find another place to worship.

Finally, in all cases, I trust God to supply the needs of our church despite any loss. Shortly before we moved into our own building, we suffered several losses, including a key member who died suddenly, a key family who moved away due to a job situation,

and a family who transferred to another church due to a health problem coupled with the distance to our new church. Since we were going from rent of \$375 per month to a mortgage of \$6,494 per month, I was somewhat concerned about these losses. We never saw a decline in attendance or finances, however, but kept moving forward. Similarly, a year later we lost five families in one month, primarily due to job and family considerations, yet some of the moves proved to be beneficial for the unity of the church. Again, we never saw a decline, but in a month we had more than replaced them with new families.

*To influence people, rely upon the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and godly example over time.* Leaders are not dictators or lords over God's people. Jesus is the Lord, and they will ultimately give account to Him, not to us. (See Romans 14:10- 12.) The church belongs to Him. We are simply stewards—managers, attendants, servants with a trust. We are not to force people to submit to God but to encourage them to follow the Lord freely. We are not accountable for their decisions but for our ministry. And in the final analysis we cannot save them or make them live a holy life; we must trust God to work in them by His grace.

If we try too hard to impose our will upon them, perhaps we are more concerned about our ego and our reputation than in helping them to become mature Christians who have wisdom and discernment. Perhaps we are relying too much on our ability instead of the power of God. We should believe that the same gospel which worked for us will also work for them. We should have confidence that biblical preaching and teaching, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the positive influence of the congregation will lead people over time into practical holiness of life, both inwardly and outwardly.

For instance, a number of people come to our church on Sunday mornings but do not make the full commitment that I teach and expect. I am not offended by them, however, nor do I force them to commit or leave. I do not judge the strength of our congregation by them, nor do I worry about what visiting Pentecostals might think of them. Rather, I evaluate our congregation primarily by our Wednesday night attendees and by those who are actively involved in some ministry of the church.

But I see the Sunday morning crowd as containing our best prospects for evangelism and discipleship. After all, they are already coming to us, instead of our having to find them. My goal is to move them to the next level of commitment, not by attacking,

scolding, browbeating, or even asserting spiritual authority over them, but by unleashing the power of the gospel. For some, I am not truly their pastor but merely their preacher. Nevertheless, I gladly accept the challenge to minister to them, because over time I have the advantage: the life-transforming Word and Spirit of God are on my side.

## EXAMPLES

The following are some instances in which love, kindness, and respect made the difference in people's lives. They illustrate the kind of approach that wins souls, retains converts, and grows a church.

One woman who came into our church gradually began to accept our teachings of inward and outward holiness, but due to tragic circumstances earlier in life, she struggled with being able to trust leaders and submit to their authority. After some time, she told me that she was ready to accept our guidelines for leadership and wanted to participate in the music ministry of the church. We scheduled her to sing a solo in a couple of months.

Not long afterward, she called to inform me that she had broken one of our guidelines because she thought it was simply a matter of tradition, legalism, and control. She concluded, "So I guess you'll take me off the schedule to sing." Immediately, I sensed that her real problem was not the particular issue that she had raised, but she was struggling with authority. Although her antagonistic comments had angered me and I could have given her an instant Bible study on the sin of rebellion, I responded calmly, "No, let's just leave everything as it is for now. We still have plenty of time before you are scheduled to sing. Let's both pray for God's will in this matter, and I will give you some things to study. I believe that God will direct us and give us the answer that we need."

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In a few days, she came to me with an apologetic and repentant heart. She was convinced of the scriptural truth of the teaching in question and would gladly follow it. After examining her own heart, she had concluded that the real issue was one of trust. Because of the answer that I gave, she had come to realize that I genuinely cared for her and that I would love and accept her even when she did something that displeased me. This event was a milestone in her walk with God. Today she is one of the most effective soulwinners in our church and a strong supporter of the message of holiness.

A corporate executive visited a special service in response to a newspaper

advertisement, and she received the Holy Ghost. She continued to attend her denominational church on Sunday morning, but she would visit our service on Sunday afternoon. Although she originally did not intend to tell anyone what had happened to her, her husband immediately knew that she had changed, and so did her coworkers and employees. Soon she was witnessing to them about the Holy Spirit and encouraging them to visit our church.

She continued doing this for several months, but she did not seem to see her need to be baptized in Jesus' name. Finally, I felt that I had an obligation to present the Jesus Name message to her directly, even though she was not committed to our church, so my wife and I took her out to lunch. Over the meal, I recounted the examples of Jesus Name baptism in the Book of Acts, and I concluded with the story of the disciples at Ephesus who had been baptized with John's baptism. I pointed out that their original baptism was the will of God for that time; yet when they received a new understanding, they were rebaptized specifically to take on the name of Jesus. I told her, "We do not attack or condemn anyone who has taken a step toward God by being baptized in the trinitarian formula. We appreciate any sincere effort to follow the Lord. Nevertheless, once people see the truth of water baptism in Jesus' name in the Scriptures, they should not be content with their former experience. Instead, they need to obey the Word of God and to receive everything that God has for them."

Soon, the lady was baptized in Jesus' name and became part of our church. Within a few months, her husband, mother, and brother were all baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Later she remarked to me, "If you had said that I needed to be rebaptized in order to be saved, I would not have come back to the church again. But you presented it as a matter of obedience to the Bible, and I could see that I needed to take that step. Thank you for explaining it to me in a way that I could understand and accept." Today, she and her husband are part of the leadership team of our church.

One lady came for a few times and felt the presence of God strongly. At the end of the service, I went back to where she sat and asked if she would like to pray. She explained that she had been attending a denominational church for some time but did not have assurance of salvation. I told her that she could have a definite personal relationship with God in the power of the Holy Spirit and asked if she wanted to pray. She responded that the ladies of our church did not wear makeup, and since she did, she did not think she could become part of our church.

I responded, “I am not trying to get you to join a church but to have a personal relationship with God. We will never force you to do anything against your will. And I am not concerned about your wearing makeup; in fact, you will see others in our services who wear makeup. At this point, all I want you to do is to repent of your sins, establish a personal relationship with Jesus, and be filled with His Spirit. From that point on, I am confident that He will lead you to do whatever He wants you to do. All I will ever ask you to do is to follow Him.”

She continued coming to church, and the Lord continued to work in her life. Eventually, she received the Holy Ghost, and so did six other members of her family. Today she understands and follows the teachings of holiness, both inwardly and outwardly—not because anyone told her that she had to do so, but because she developed these convictions through the teaching of the Word and the work of the Holy Spirit.

### **PERSONAL ATTENTION AND FOLLOW-UP**

Personal care means treating each person as important and developing policies and procedures to implement this principle. Ignoring someone intentionally is worse than neglecting someone unintentionally, but the result is the same—the person’s needs are not met. Thus, a church must take practical steps to ensure that contacts, visitors, and regular attendees do not fall between the cracks.

From the beginning of our church, I considered that I was a steward of everyone to whom God led us. Therefore, to care for people properly, I established a system to follow up on them, and it is now fully computerized. We began keeping a record of all names, addresses, and telephone numbers of people we met, along with notes about their situation and records of our follow-up efforts. We divided them into three categories: (1) *contacts*—those we meet or who are referred to us; (2) *visitors*—those who have come to a service; and (3) *regulars*—those who attend services regularly. Over the years, it has been gratifying to see people move from one list to the next.

We try to follow up regularly on our contacts and visitors through personal letters, telephone calls, and fliers that advertise special events. First-time visitors always receive a letter from the pastor and a telephone call from the outreach director, and in some cases they receive a personal visit at home. Second-time visitors receive a second letter from the pastor.

When people express a desire to attend our church regularly, or when they come three times in a row, we add them to our regular list. This designation does not make them a voting member, for that requires acceptance of our teachings, written application, and approval by the pastor. But in every other way it makes them part of our church, and we treat them as such, regardless of their experience with God or level of commitment.

Designating them as a regular automatically adds them to our attendance roll and assigns them to a care group (discussed below). We give them a new-comer's information packet and a church directory, invite them to a newcomer's potluck dinner, and encourage them to attend a one-night "Introduction to New Life" class. The newcomer's packet provides information on home Bible studies, discipleship classes, care groups, and our church's structure, leadership, ministries, and programs.

Our goal is to make them feel part of the church as soon as possible. If they miss a service, we mail them a church bulletin, and the pastor, assistant pastor, or other minister will call to see how they are doing.

For this system to work, we take attendance at every service. By Wednesday, the pastor and outreach director receive a list of all first-time visitors, and the pastor, assistant pastor, and care group leaders receive a list of absent families. With this information, we are able to follow up according to our predetermined plan of action. (For our comprehensive visitor follow-up strategy, see appendix C. For job descriptions of our outreach director and our discipleship director, see appendix D.)

Once people begin attending regularly, are baptized in Jesus' name, or receive the Holy Ghost, we urge them to become involved in our discipleship program. Specifically, we recommend the following classes:

1. *Introduction to New Life*. In one lesson, taught once every two months on a Wednesday night, we provide an overview of our assembly's history, basic beliefs, leadership, structure, ministries, and vision, and we give a tour of our building.
2. *Exploring God's Word*. These twelve lessons cover the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, with emphasis on the New Testament plan of salvation in typology and fulfillment. Sometimes, a convert has already received this teaching, but if not,



we offer it as a home Bible study, in a small group on Tuesday night, or by video.

3. *Christian Discipleship*. These twelve lessons, taught in a small group on Tuesday night, cover the basic principles of Christian living. We start by giving students the tract *Growing On* and discussing the six essentials that it addresses: living by faith, prayer, reading the Bible, church attendance, witnessing to others, and tithing. Next we provide an overview of repentance, water baptism in Jesus' name, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, so that they will have a clear understanding of what has happened or is happening in their lives. At intervals, we give them copies of three booklets that I have written: *Essentials of the New Birth*, *Essential Doctrines of the Bible*, and *Essentials of Holiness*. Finally, most of the course is devoted to a Christian view of authority, forgiveness, trials, relationships, marriage, family, and finances, because these are the practical issues of life that will make or break most converts.

We also urge move-ins, long-standing members, and potential home Bible study teachers to consider taking these courses if they have never done so. At present, we are planning to add modules that will explore some of the discipleship topics in greater depth. They will be open to all interested persons. Our Sunday school classes are also important tools for discipleship training.

In working with people, we must realize once again the importance of persistence, as we discussed in chapter 3. In many cases, it takes years of prayer and contact before we see the results we desire. Persistent love and care are instrumental both to win people to the Lord and to disciple them.<sup>104</sup>

For instance, one teenager received the Holy Ghost in our church but did not have support from his parents. Over the years he came at various times and was renewed in the Holy Spirit on three occasions before he finally became faithful. Several other teenagers associated with our church made seriously wrong choices, such as committing fornication or having an abortion, but over time they became mature disciples and now work in various ministries. Pastors and other leaders should realize that it will probably take three to five years of diligent service before they begin to see the full results of their labor. It takes this amount of time to win people's confidence, establish a reputation



of stability, and see the Word of God produce a harvest. Our church is now reaping a harvest from contacts and prayers of our early years. It is not uncommon for someone to come to our church after being contacted in several ways over several years.

For instance, one young lady was invited to church by a friend who received the Holy Ghost. She also received the Holy Ghost but did not continue coming. Several years later, another friend of hers received the Holy Ghost in our church and brought her again. Similarly, a man came to church and received the Holy Ghost after being invited by a friend who had attended Alcoholics Anonymous with him. Several years later, he began working with another of our church members, who brought him to church again. One man heard about our church through a neighbor, then through a coworker, and finally by meeting me. The concrete contractor for our first building visited a service four years after construction, and today he and his wife are members of our assembly. As the years pass and as the church grows, the contacts and associations multiply, enhancing our outreach.

The following are some examples in which persistent follow-up proved to be the key in reaching people. A lady and her adult daughter began attending our church and seemed to enjoy it. They had been raised, however, in a church that totally denied the existence of miracles and speaking in tongues today. After coming for several weeks, they stopped altogether, and it appeared that they simply could not accept our doctrine and worship. Nevertheless, I decided to visit them at home.

They were receptive to my visit, but they explained how different our message was from what they had been taught. In fact, when they asked their pastor about the Pentecostal experience, he specifically told them that it was not for today. As a result, they had decided not to come to our church anymore. The daughter remarked, however, that she enjoyed our worship, but out of respect for her mother's belief she would not be coming back. At this point, the mother said, "I enjoy that church too. I thought *you* were the one who could not accept the teaching. As for me, I don't really care to go back to our old church."

Upon hearing this, I gave them a short Bible study on the Holy Ghost and answered their questions. In a few weeks, both of them had received the Holy Ghost, and not long afterwards the daughter's teenage daughter was also filled. Instantly, we had a family of three generations in our church.

Many people are in our church today because we kept in touch with them over the years, either through periodic calls and mailings or through someone in the church who was their friend. One lady received a Bible study from us and seemed receptive, but she did not make a complete commitment. Five years after her last attendance, she visited our church again. This time her heart was ready, and soon she was baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Spirit. Today her entire family is in the church.

One of our converts had a history of alcohol and drug abuse as well as instability and conflict. After being in church for a while, he reverted to some of his old patterns of thinking and behavior. Although several people, including me, tried to encourage and counsel him, he continued on a downhill slide until one day he had a major blowup at work, quit his job, and decided not to come back to church.

I tried to contact him by telephone, through his wife, and through other people, but he did not respond. Finally, I decided that I needed to see him personally, so on a Sunday afternoon I visited his home. At first, he was not very receptive, but through communication and prayer the Lord softened his heart, and he promised to visit the church again. Over the next few weeks, the Lord performed a powerful work of restoration in his life. By his own testimony, however, without that personal visit he would not be in church today.

When we first began our church, I placed an advertisement in the newspaper stating that we believed in miracles, deliverance, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Only one person responded to our first advertisement—an elderly Hispanic woman who spoke broken English and who was almost an invalid. From a natural point of view, it did not seem likely that we could minister successfully to her, but I had decided to walk through every door<sup>106</sup> that was open. We began visiting her home, praying with her, encouraging her by telephone, and helping her occasionally with groceries and other necessities. Due to her physical condition, we were able to bring her to church only a few times.

Nevertheless, she continued to express interest in the gospel, so my wife taught her a four-lesson Bible study, *The Life and Times of Jesus Christ*, which ends with the Day of Pentecost and the message of salvation in Acts 2. As they progressed through the study, the lady said to her, “No one has ever told me that Jesus died for my sins. I am an old woman, seventy-eight years old. Can I be forgiven of the sins of my whole life?”

My wife assured her that she could, leading her to repentance and explaining water baptism to her. Afterwards, I baptized her in her bathtub in the name of Jesus Christ. (For the occasion, I learned the wording in Spanish: “en el nombre del Señor Jesucristo.”)

The next day she called me with excitement in her voice. Usually she called us for prayer because she was depressed, sick, or had problems with her family, but this time she said, “Brother, what have you done to me? The old Dora is gone! I am not sad anymore; I am so happy!” I explained that Jesus Christ had washed away all her sins and had given her a new beginning.

Several days later, as I was visiting her, she remarked, “Brother, you won’t believe what happened to me. While I was praying, I started speaking some words, and I don’t know what they were.” I asked if they were either English or Spanish, but she insisted that they were words she did not know. I replied, “Sister, that is the Holy Spirit we have been telling you about. God has filled you with His Spirit!” Winning Sister Dora took time, patience, and personal attention, but it was worth all of that. She has since gone to be with the Lord, but we rejoice at the wonderful work He did at the end of her life.

A backslider visited our church and felt the presence of God, but she was full of mistrust and even hostility. I knew God was drawing her, so occasionally I would call to invite her to church, but she did not respond very favorably. Even the message on her answering machine communicated rejection with its sarcastic tone and background of hard rock music.

One day, however, she called to ask if I would perform a wedding ceremony for her. I could not do so<sup>107</sup> because of the complicating circumstances of a divorce, and when I tried to explain my policy, she became upset. I reluctantly concluded that I had probably ended my chances of winning her.

Some time later, however, she showed up at church with a totally changed attitude. God had indeed been dealing with her, and she was renewed in her relationship with God. Today she is a faithful, hardworking, loyal member of the church.

## CARE GROUPS

As our church has grown, giving everyone the personal attention and care that they need has become a greater challenge. In anticipation of this problem, when our Sunday attendance reached approximately one hundred I instituted a structure that we call care groups.

The purpose of these groups is not to replace the ministry of the pastor or to divide the church, but to maintain fellowship and personal care as the church grows larger and to ensure that individuals do not fall between the cracks. In this way, we can enjoy the many advantages of a large church while retaining the close-knit, family feeling of a small church.

The groups are organized along geographical lines, with approximately ten families per group. Each group has a leader, usually a married couple but occasionally a single adult. The leaders report to the care group director, who in turn reports to the pastor.

The individual care group leaders pledge to pray for their group members every week, to contact them regularly, and to befriend them. They make a point to see them at church, to pray with those who come to the altar, and to contact absent members. As needs arise in their group, they plan food for the sick, hospital visits, wedding showers, baby showers, housewarmings, assistance to the elderly, and so on. Of course, everyone in the church is invited to showers and housewarmings, but the respective care group sponsors them, and it is understood that people cannot attend every such event, particularly those outside their care group.

The pastor and ministerial staff still check on absentees and make hospital visits, but the care group structure helps to ensure that no one is overlooked and that the members of the body minister to one another. While many people expect the pastor to show interest and concern, it means a lot to them when other church members show similar interest and concern. The care groups also provide an easy way to organize major church events and to communicate urgent information quickly throughout the church.

Once a week, the care group leaders report to the care group director—by telephone, e-mail, or paper form—regarding the contacts they have made and any special needs, problems, or news that should be communicated to the pastor. The care group director

compiles these reports and submits them to the pastor by e-mail. The leaders are instructed not to be nosy or overbearing but simply to report what members volunteer and to keep confidential the personal information in their reports. Their position is not one of authority or instruction but one of service. (For job descriptions of the care group director and the care group leaders, see appendix D.)

As our church has grown, this system has assisted me greatly as pastor. For instance, someone may have an upcoming medical test or job interview. When the church was small, people would mention such matters to me in conversation, but now that the church is larger, some do not want to bother me with nonessential matters and some do not want to wait their turn to speak with me after service. The care group leader usually finds out the information, however, and includes it in the report. I can then pray about the situation, perhaps call the individual, or later ask the person how the test or interview went. People are sometimes surprised but always pleased that their pastor is aware of their concerns and needs. Indeed, some people will specifically ask their care group leader to communicate information to me. This system also helps me to be aware of many personal and interpersonal problems sooner rather than later or not at all, so that I can help resolve them in a timely manner.

We are now in the process of appointing assistants for every care group, for three reasons: (1) to help with the workload, (2) to involve more people, and (3) to train future leaders for when we subdivide to make new groups. We have also appointed assistant directors for the whole department.

The care groups do not have weekly meetings like traditional cell groups. The reason is that I do not want to burden people by adding another function that they are expected to attend every week, yet I do not want to sacrifice any of our existing services, for each one fills a unique role. (See chapter 4.) However, we encourage each care group to schedule occasional prayer meetings and socials and to consider outreach opportunities such as home Bible studies and outdoor services.

Once a quarter, the care group department sponsors a Sunday potluck dinner for newcomers. Everyone who has begun attending our church in the last three months, as well as everyone who has never been to one of these potlucks, is invited. Also, in attendance are the pastor, assistant pastor, care group director, assistant care group director, leaders and assistants of all groups with new members, and everyone's families. This dinner gives

new people the opportunity to have fellowship with the pastor, to meet others, and to hear an explanation of the care group concept.

Care for individuals, from evangelism to discipleship, is the local church's reason for existence. As an assembly grows, it must become more intentional about providing for the needs of everyone and not overlooking anyone. No matter how big a congregation becomes, its leaders must be like the shepherd whom Christ spoke about—willing to leave ninety-nine sheep in the fold to look for one lost sheep (Matthew 18:12-13).

Providing the personal care that each soul needs and deserves requires a great deal of assistance. Fortunately, a growing church that implements the last of our seven principles—personal involvement—will have people to meet the challenge.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT

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*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12).*

**G**od has given the fivefold ministry to the church for the “perfecting” (KJV) or the “equipping” of the believers. The saints are equipped so that they can do “the work of ministry.” Here “ministry” means “service,” or all the functions of the church. Every believer should have a ministry—not necessarily public preaching but a specific place of service in the body of Christ.

It is the task of church leaders to help each saint find his work of ministry and train him to perform that task properly. In particular, those who hold the five ministerial offices are to inspire, motivate, disciple, instruct, and prepare the saints so that everyone is an active, productive member of the body.

When each member performs his proper function, the whole body will be edified, or built up. The goal is to attain maturity in Christ. Beginning with “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3), we are to pursue “the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). We are to “grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:15-16).

Here we see that the church is like a body, a living organism. Each member has a vital role to play, but the roles are not the same: “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them” (Romans 12:4-6). “There are

diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all” (I Corinthians 12:4-7).

The New Testament establishes qualifications for leadership in the church, indicating that we should not rush people into positions before they are ready spiritually. (See Acts 6:3; I Timothy 3:1-13.) Indeed, in the case of a bishop (pastor), Paul wrote that the church should not select “a novice” (I Timothy 3:6).

At the same time, Paul raised up local leaders as soon as possible. On their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas established churches in a number of cities. Then they retraced their steps, confirming the new believers and selecting ministerial leaders in each local congregation to continue the work under their supervision. “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” (Acts 14:23). Undoubtedly, the earliest leaders already had a strong biblical and moral foundation as faithful Jews or God-fearing Gentiles before they came into the church. (See, for example, II Timothy 1:5; 3:15.) Nevertheless, the apostles were willing to entrust their converts with positions of responsibility in a relatively short time.

A key to winning and retaining people is to involve them in relationships and activities. When people get involved, they get connected. They feel that they belong, they feel important, and they feel needed and wanted. The church becomes “our church” instead of “your church” or “this church.”

Not only is personal involvement beneficial for everyone, it fulfills the biblical pattern of the members of the body ministering to one another. The pastor should not try to meet every need himself, but he should lead, train, and inspire the members so that the church is able to function effectively and meet the needs of everyone.

## **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

Because of these scriptural and practical considerations, at New Life Church we seek to integrate new people as soon as possible by connecting them to our church in three ways: (1) *Age groups*—Sunday school classes, preteens, youth, singles, young families, “progressives” (age 40 and over), seniors. (2) *Geographical groups*—care groups, as



described in chapter 6, that contact people regularly and minister to individual needs. (3) *Interest groups*—men’s fellowship, ladies’ fellowship, departments, ministries, special activities.

Even though newcomers are typically not qualified for some ministries, we try to find areas in which they can be involved, such as helping with socials, dinners, maintenance, paperwork, and so on. Our goal is for everyone who regularly attends our church to be involved in some activity or ministry.

If converts, or even visitors who attend regularly, become connected in these three ways, they will quickly make three sets of friends in the church. They will have to alter their lifestyle to accommodate their new activities, and they will lessen their ties with worldly friends. At this point, it becomes difficult for them to drop out of church.

In order to incorporate new people, we create jobs and subdivide existing jobs. As the church grows, we continue to revise and upgrade our structure in order to minister more effectively and to involve more people.

This process of change and involving new people entails some risk, but it is a calculated risk. Through prayer, planning, and leadership, we can ensure that the rewards far outweigh the risks. Let us briefly discuss some guidelines for involving people effectively and beneficially.

## DELEGATION

If a church is to grow beyond the size that one person can personally manage—about 100 to 150 <sup>113</sup>weekly attendance—then the pastor will need to delegate authority and responsibility. Exodus 18:13-26 provides a good example. Moses exhausted himself by personally trying to make every decision and meet every person’s need. His father-in-law counseled him to appoint leaders under him to handle the majority of situations and reserve only the most important matters for his personal consideration and intervention.

God honors delegated authority as long as the delegate operates under the umbrella of his or her leader. God even promises to let the delegate share in the anointing of the

leader so that he or she can assist in carrying out the leader's work. The Lord instructed Moses, "Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone" (Numbers 11:16-17).

When we introduce key leaders at New Life Church—such as ministerial assistants, care group leaders, departmental directors, and church board members—we present them to the congregation as servants of the people under the direction of the pastor. We pray for God to anoint them to serve in their position, and we ask for God to give them a portion of the pastor's vision, burden, and anointing in their designated role so that they can fulfill it effectively.

In order for delegation to be successful, leaders must do three things:

1. *Delegate authority.* Delegates must have real authority for their assigned tasks, and others need to know it. The leader must let delegates take initiative, give them the chance to implement their ideas, provide assistance for their plans, and support their decisions. When their decisions seem erroneous, the leader should avoid interfering as much as possible and let them learn from their mistakes, perhaps offering gentle guidance and advice. In the case of a major error that the leader must correct, he or she should first approach the delegate privately and involve the delegate in the rectifying process.

2. *Delegate responsibility.* Authority without responsibility soon becomes meaningless. When people are willing to work, we must find useful tasks for them to perform. Merely giving people a title does not truly involve them but will eventually frustrate them if no real responsibility comes with it. And when responsibility is given, the leader should not step in to reassume it at the first sign of problems but should train and guide delegates in the fulfillment of that responsibility.

3. *Establish lines of accountability.* There must be regular communication through reports and meetings; delegates must know that the leader will evaluate their work on a timely basis. We all work better when someone in authority regularly checks to see if we have accomplished our assigned tasks and how well we have done them. Moreover,

the leader must have the power to make adjustments when necessary.

In the process of delegation, authority must equal responsibility ( $A = R$ ). That is, if a leader gives someone a job to do, then the leader needs to give that person the means to accomplish it. Likewise, if someone has received authority, then she needs a corresponding responsibility, or else she will try to exert her authority in areas that are not her responsibility, thereby causing confusion. In short, if authority does not equal responsibility, the end result will be frustration, conflict, and failure.

There are two reasons why some leaders are reluctant to delegate. First, some are afraid that no one else can do a job as well as they can. Initially, that is probably true. But the task of a leader is to train and equip others. If the leader does everything himself, or allows only a few experienced, fully qualified people to have an active role, then he is not doing his job properly. He must be a good steward of everyone whom God has placed in his care. Thus, he should help everyone find a productive place in the kingdom of God. He should identify people who have potential in various fields and then help them become qualified to work in those areas.

It is tempting to use just a few reliable people in certain roles such as musician, song leader, teacher, usher, and so on—and in a small church it may be necessary. If the leader is not careful, however, he will rely exclusively on family members or other confidants and not give others the opportunity to learn and grow. Instead, he needs to look at people with God's eyes, identifying their potential, offering opportunities, investing time in training, and avoiding nepotism or favoritism. The outcome will be many qualified, dedicated workers in each area of need.

For instance, ~~when~~ our church was small we had to rely upon a limited number of musicians and praise singers, primarily my wife. But whenever people come into the church with musical ability, or even potential musical ability, we try to develop them. Initially, they may help in children's church, youth ministry, nursing home service, or during prayer after service. When they reach a sufficient level of proficiency, we add them to our rotation. Even my wife, who is our main keyboard player, alternates between organ and keyboard and sometimes plays neither. Others routinely share the load of playing during prayer time, during midweek service, and for special songs and choir numbers. Thus, everyone with musical aspirations can look forward to a future role, and everyone with present musical ability has an opportunity for significant involvement now.

Even when no one can do a job as well as the leader, if the leader refuses to delegate, then the job may not be done at all. A delegate who has only seventy-five percent of the desired ability may do more for the kingdom than a highly qualified leader who is too busy to give personal attention to the task. Moreover, when someone is given an assigned task, he or she will typically develop a burden and a focus for that particular task that the leader does not have. The result is that each area of the work receives greater personal attention and care. Ten partially trained leaders working at fifty percent efficiency will accomplish far more than one superb leader. Proper delegation will always generate more ideas, attention to detail, outreach, soulwinning, and discipleship than one leader working alone.

For instance, if the pastor is also the youth leader, then the youth program will simply be one of many tasks on his agenda, and sometimes it will not be his priority. If the church has a dedicated youth leader, however, then the youth program will always be his or her priority, receiving careful consideration in prayer, planning, and investment of time. The pastor will still provide direction and oversight, but instead of the youth program depending on his personal initiative, it will have its own momentum, which he can encourage and direct as needed.

My goal is to start using people in responsible positions as soon as they have basic spiritual and practical qualifications. I do not wait for them to attain perfection, for several reasons: (1) They need on-the-job training to become fully effective. (2) They need involvement for their own spiritual strength and growth. Especially when people have burden and enthusiasm, we must use them or lose them. Even if we do not lose them from the church, they will likely lose their desire to serve, turning from cooperation to criticism or apathy. (3) When we put people to work, we often uncover hidden talents and stimulate new commitments that otherwise never would have surfaced. (4) I always have more jobs than people, and even if every job is filled, I always have more initiatives in mind. Thus, the choice is not between a partially qualified person and a highly qualified person, but between getting a job done at least in part or not getting the job done at all.

As a founding pastor, my method of operation has been to start initiatives and turn them over to others as soon as they have been trained. I have tried to work myself out of as many jobs as possible so that I can move on to other areas. For example, my wife and I originated almost all the departments of the church. Initially, I was in charge of all

outreach, I began our men's ministry, and I even began a Spanish ministry by teaching a Bible study through an interpreter. My wife was our first Sunday school director, music director, and ladies director. All these positions are now filled by others, giving us more time for pastoral ministry and new endeavors.

The second reason why some leaders are reluctant to delegate is that they are afraid someone else *can* do a job as well as they can, or even better. But leaders need to be secure in their calling and position in the kingdom of God. The mark of a successful leader is to surround himself with qualified people, and the job of a leader is to develop qualified people. The best leaders are not necessarily those who can do every job to perfection, for this type of person often tries to micromanage everything and ends up retarding progress. Rather, the best leaders are those who recognize their limitations and consciously choose assistants who can compensate for their weaknesses and magnify their strengths.

When Moses delegated authority and God anointed those leaders, some of them began to prophesy. Out of concern that they might undermine Moses' position, Joshua, his young assistant, suggested that he stop them. Moses responded, "Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the LoRD'S people were prophets and that the LoRD would put His Spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29). He was secure in his position and wished that God could greatly use everyone under his leadership.

When a leader is confident in his role, he gives permission for followers to excel in their roles without anyone thinking that such excellence is a threat to the leader. But when a leader suppresses the ability and activity of others, often he causes his worst fears to come true—some people withdraw emotional or financial support, others leave, and yet others rebel. People fail to realize their potential, and the church runs in circles or stagnates.

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If someone compliments my wife, I take the compliment personally, for we are partners, and I am the one who chose her for my bride. I refuse to be jealous of her achievements, for the better she does, the more I benefit. I feel the same about our assistant pastor and the other leaders in our church, for I chose them also and helped mentor and train them. I sometimes tell our congregation, "You won't upset me by saying how much you appreciate our assistant pastor, for we are a team. If you have confidence in him, then I have greater assurance when I give him jobs to do or when I have to be out of town."

Of course, I expect everyone to acknowledge the unique role of the pastor, but I also want people to have confidence in and respect for other leaders. If I as pastor exhibit such confidence and respect, then the church will also. If I do not, then the church will not, and those leaders will not be effective.

## SELECTING WORKERS

As we have discussed, in order to involve everyone personally, we must use new people—those who are relatively new to the church and those who are new to an assigned task or function. Everyone needs to feel that he or she will not be held back by prejudice, favoritism, or cliques but can easily be accepted and can easily attain a position of involvement and influence. (See chapter 6.)

While there is some risk in using relatively untried people, it is amazing how often they will rise to the occasion. Often, it is a position of responsibility, even a small one, that motivates someone to step up to the next level of commitment. By placing confidence in people, we give them powerful encouragement to achieve things they have never done before. Let us discuss some ways in which we can take advantage of this principle and yet minimize the risk of failure.

*Establish a minimum list of qualifications.* For leadership and representative roles, I have adopted guidelines for our church. (See appendix B.) For most defined positions, we have job descriptions that identify additional qualifications and skills. For people who do not yet meet the qualifications, we find or create places for them to work. Periodically, I explain to our church that we use people in various volunteer roles that do not involve leadership or representation of the church. Thus, some of them may not fully adhere to our standards; nevertheless, we want them to have a feeling of belonging and ownership. When church members clearly understand this concept, they are able to differentiate between roles and do not become confused about the standards of the church. Instead, they will adopt the same openness towards new people, remaining secure in their own convictions while avoiding judgmentalism and a “holier than thou” attitude.

*Start with small responsibilities.* We first give new people a small task, and if they do well, we give them a larger task. Jesus Himself enunciated this principle, and it works at every level. (See Matthew 25:21; Luke 16:10-12.) If someone feels a call to preach, I urge him to teach home Bible studies, involve himself in an outreach endeavor,

and start winning souls if he has not already done so. After he has worked diligently in outreach, then we will consider him for speaking roles. As he begins to preach, we will use him in outreach services, youth services, daughter works, and other small meetings. From there, we may schedule him to speak for ten minutes on a Wednesday night before I teach the main lesson or to emcee part of the Wednesday service.

*Use spiritual discernment.* We should make personnel decisions with prayer, as Jesus did (Luke 6:12-13). More than looking for abilities, I look for people who have enthusiasm for the Lord and His work; who have a cooperative, teachable spirit; and who have been faithful in small things.

*Look for people who have initiative and burden.* Before appointing someone to a position, I see if the person has already expressed a burden for a certain work and is actively involved in it. For a new position, I typically do not give someone a job title until he or she has already been working successfully in that role without a lot of public explanation or recognition. In other words, the person has been instrumental in developing that role. In general, a person's burden and involvement should already be evident, not only to the pastor but to other committed people, so that his or her appointment comes as no surprise. For instance, I tell aspiring ministers that I can give them training and opportunity but I cannot give them a ministry. They must pray for God to direct their steps and open doors. Then they must take the initiative. If they will approach me with a burden and a plan of action, I will support, train, and assist them in their endeavor, but they must take responsibility for their own ministry. Thus, I encourage them to explore the possibility of teaching home Bible studies or starting an outreach at a jail, nursing home, juvenile detention center, retirement home, or college campus. If they conduct a Bible study that grows, we will consider a daughter work. In every case, however, I want to see them step out by faith, follow the leading of the Lord, and develop their own opportunities for ministry. I also like for them to serve as care group leaders or assistants, because learning to work with and care for people is at least as important as learning to speak publicly.

*Rely on department heads and activity coordinators to identify potential workers.* I have trained our lay leaders in the foregoing principles and instructed them to look for people who can work in their area of responsibility, either officially or unofficially. When new people become faithful to church, our leaders soon begin considering them for some type of responsibility. When a leader thinks someone is suitable for a



certain role, he or she comes to me with the suggestion. If I approve, then the leader approaches the person. Sometimes I want to talk to the person first to ensure that he or she meets the necessary qualifications. Other times, I am immediately confident of the suggestion and simply ask the leader to review the qualifications with the person.

*If someone does not work well in a position, find a creative way to move him or her into another area of responsibility.* This situation requires tact, but frequently the person himself senses the need for change and is quite willing to take a suggestion. Often the solution is to make the change as a natural part of involving yet another new person and to swap, subdivide, or modify job responsibilities.

### **USING PEOPLE WHO HAVE FAILED**

The church is a place of grace, mercy, and second chances. It should specialize in delivering those who have sinned, healing those who are wounded, and restoring those who have fallen. An important step in the healing and restoration process is to place confidence and trust in people.

For those who have failed in leadership positions in the past, we usually do not give them direct responsibility in an area associated with their past failure or possible present weakness. If they have regained spiritual qualifications, however, we try to find a place where they can be successful.

When people in the church sin, they need to repent, but when they truly repent they need to experience forgiveness not only from God but from God's people. If someone in a leadership role violates the church's teachings, he or she will probably need to be removed from that role, at least for a time, but the pastor can usually arrange this quietly and tactfully. And the pastor can give the person hope that he or she can again find a place of service in time.

If the sin has been private, then the matter can be handled privately. In some cases, the transgressor can simply tell his departmental director or activity coordinator that he needs to take a break for a while, and the pastor can determine when he should be reinstated to a position. Only the pastor needs to know if the break is simply for rest or for spiritual discipline and renewal. If the sin is public, then the repentance needs to be as public as the sin. Sufficient time needs to pass to ensure that the person has indeed made changes in



his life to safeguard against the recurrence of the sin and to ensure that the congregation can place confidence in him again. In rare cases, a public sin against the church will necessitate a public confession, but such a case should be handled with dignity, tact, and pastoral guidance.

## TRAINING

It is not fair to appoint people to a position without giving them direction and training so that they can fulfill their job successfully. The church should provide training for ministerial and lay leaders, and each department should consider ways to train its volunteers. Here are examples of the training that our church provides:

- *Ministers class*: twice a month on Sunday from 5:00 to 6:00 Pm for those involved in or aspiring to the preaching ministry. Usually, I teach on a designated subject, such as homiletics, or from a textbook that I give to them, such as *The Pentecostal Minister*. We also use this time for discussion, planning, brainstorming, and sharing of opportunities in their respective fields of labor. Occasionally, we will have a guest speaker.
- *Ministry preparation class*: once a month on Sunday from 5:00 to 6:00 Pm. This class is for young people who are exploring the possibility of a call to preach. I tell them not to claim to be preachers but to learn to be servants and soulwinners. We discuss spiritual disciplines, educational preparation, foundational doctrines, and leadership principles—all of which will benefit them whether or not they become preachers. I also give them books, such as *A Handbook of Basic Doctrines* and *So You May Feel a Call to Preach*.
- *Leadership development class*:<sup>121</sup> once a month on Sunday from 5:00 to 6:00 Pm. This class is open to everyone, but the goal is to develop leaders. We announce and discuss topics such as time management, leadership principles, praying with seekers, teaching home Bible studies, mentoring others, and so on.
- *Leadership team meetings, seminars, and annual retreat*: for department heads, as discussed in chapter 2.
- *Departmental seminars, conferences, and retreats*, sponsored by the local church, section, district, or national organization. Usually, the participants are expected to

pay their own way, but the church often subsidizes the costs. For national meetings, the church or department will often pay travel costs for key leaders. Most of our departments—care groups, children, discipleship, music, outreach, Spanish-language, singles, Sunday school, young families, and youth—have benefited from this type of instruction.

- *Quarterly or monthly departmental meetings:* Some departments, such as care groups, children, outreach, Sunday school, and youth, have periodic meetings for training, planning, and motivation. Usually these meetings feature a speaker from our church.
- *Self-study or outside training programs,* such as certification for Sunday school, jail ministry, and alcohol recovery ministry.
- *Evening Bible school courses:* on Monday evenings from 7:00 to 10:00 in the spring and fall. Open to everyone, they focus on biblical and doctrinal subjects.
- *Mentoring.* Leaders are encouraged to use assistants and develop them through one-on-one interaction and on-the-job training.

Training is an important means by which leaders can invest quality time in people with the greatest desire and potential. Too often, leaders, especially pastors, spend most of their time managing crises and dealing with the most urgent and desperate needs. If they are not careful, they will invest primarily in situations and people with the least potential for success. While the church must be compassionate and reach out to all people, leaders must reserve most of their time for the most productive endeavors. By training and mentoring people who have already demonstrated ability and commitment, they maximize their own effectiveness and efficiency. And by training others, they provide more resources for helping those who are in great need.

## DEPARTMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Here is a list of the departments at New Life Church along with brief descriptions:

1. *Care Groups:* provides personal care and coordination of activities based on geographical proximity. (See chapter 6.)

2. *Children*: operates children's church (see chapter 4), vacation Bible school, preteen ministry (Crusaders), scouting (currently inactive), junior Bible quizzing (currently inactive), an annual children's revival, and other programs for children.
3. *Discipleship*: orients and trains new people and offers specialized instruction for every interested person. (See chapter 6.)
4. *Ladies* (Temple Keepers): provides spiritual and social events for women, coordinates work projects, raises funds for Mother's Memorial, conducts a ladies' Bible study and prayer meeting, takes an annual trip to the district ladies' conference, and organizes our annual Harvest Fest.
5. *Men*: provides spiritual and social events for men, takes an annual trip to the district men's conference, coordinates pastor's prayer partners, and coordinates work projects for the church and for people in need.
6. *Music*: oversees and operates the adult choir, youth choir, children's choir, ensemble, special songs, musicians, praise singers, musicals, music lessons, and orchestra (potential for future).
7. *Outreach*: makes calls and visits; canvasses neighborhoods; conducts a small group Bible study at church for outreach and training; and conducts street services and out-reach endeavors for the main church, the daughter works, and other churches in the area who request assistance. This department also includes the following ministries, each of which has its own coordinator: college campus (currently inactive), deaf, home Bible studies, jail, juvenile detention center, Filipino, Korean, nursing home, retirement home, twelve-step recovery, van (picks up people without transportation including those in halfway houses), Vietnamese, and visitor follow-up.
8. *Singles*: provides spiritual and social activities approximately twice a month for single

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Personal Involvement

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adults, conducts an annual singles' conference at our church, and organizes various trips. Some activities are conducted separately for two subgroups: young singles to age thirty, usually never married (Singles 1), and older singles, usually divorced with children (Singles 2). Single adults in their late teens and early twenties are also urged to participate in youth activities, since they are in a time of transition and serve as leaders and role models for younger teens. A Sunday school class, called college and career, also ministers to singles.

9. *Spanish Language*: conducts services in Spanish on Sunday afternoon and Tuesday evening, as well as a full range of church activities. This department has become a daughter work and will soon become an autonomous church. At present, it also retains departmental status because it uses the mother church's building and thus there is a need for coordination of schedules and activities with the other departments.
10. *Sunday School*: offers classes on Sunday morning for all ages including several adult classes, conducts class social events, and presents occasional programs in church services. (See chapter 4.)
11. *Young Families*: offers a Sunday school class for young married couples and single parents up to age forty and provides spiritual and social activities for this group and their families. (Single parents can participate in this group, in the singles group, or both. Usually, those with children want at least some participation in this group.)
12. *Youth*: conducts a weekly service or other activity for youth on Friday nights, including spiritual, social, community, sectional, and district activities; organizes recreation on Tuesday nights during the summer; takes an annual trip to the district youth conference; organizes an annual youth retreat or youth trip; and raises funds for Sheaves for Christ. The program is geared for teenagers and young adults approximately through age twenty-five. Some activities are conducted separately for junior high and senior high students.

In addition, the following functions have their own coordinators, who report directly to the pastor or assistant pastor. Some of them could be placed under certain departments, especially if the departmental directors were full time. Here is a brief description of each function or group:

- *Activities*: coordinates special functions not sponsored by a department, such as weddings and all-church socials.
- *Bible quizzing*: conducts Bible memorization and trips for quizzing competition. This group works closely with the youth department but has its own coordinator and fund.
- *Drama*: presents Easter dramas, Christmas dramas, and skits for social events and church services.
- *Hosts and hostesses*: greets people before and at the beginning of every service, passes out Sunday bulletins, and obtains contact information from visitors.
- *Kitchen*: supervises the use, restocking, and cleanup of the kitchen according to the church's kitchen policy.
- *Library and bookstore*: maintains records, restocks the library and bookstore, and operates them before and after services.
- *Maintenance* (building and grounds): supervises cleaning of the building, setup for services, repairs, and yard work. Individual departments are responsible for setting up and cleaning up after their own activities.
- *Nursery*: supervises the room, supplies, volunteer workers, and paid workers according to the church's nursery policy.
- *Prayer*: promotes the various prayer endeavors of the church. (See chapter 1.)
- *PALS* (Praying and Loving Sisters): provides social, educational, and spiritual activities for senior ladies.
- *Progressives*: provides spiritual and social activities for ages forty and above.
- *Publicity*: prepares fliers, mail-outs, newspaper ads, radio spots; maintains and updates website.
- *Sound and video systems*: operates and maintains these systems; assists with music, dramas, and special events; and displays announcements, song lyrics, sermon and lesson notes, Bible readings, and special presentations.
- *Tapes*: conducts the recording, duplication, packaging, and sale of audio cassettes and videotapes.
- *Tracts*: orders tracts and restocks the tract racks.
- *Ushers*: helps with parking, seating, crowd control, and heating and air control;

receives, counts, and safeguards the offering; and communicates with the pastoral staff during services.

- *Vehicles*: maintains, operates, and schedules the church's bus and vans according to its vehicle policy.

### DAUGHTER WORKS

As pastor I encourage the ministers of our church to consider starting daughter works. Usually, a daughter work begins with a Bible study in an outlying community or area of town that is not being served effectively by our church. If there is sufficient interest and participation, the next step is to have a weekly service. The daughter work leader continues to participate in most activities of the mother church and often brings people to some of the main services. As the daughter congregation grows, other services and activities are added. The ultimate goal is for the daughter work to become a self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating church while still maintaining close fellowship with the mother church. To facilitate this process, we have a written daughter work policy that clearly spells out the commitments of the mother church pastor, the responsibilities of the daughter work pastor, and the arrangements by which they agree to work together until the new church is established.

Currently, New Life Church has four active daughter works: two in towns about thirty miles away, one in a predominantly black neighborhood in east Austin about twelve miles from our main location, and one that operates in Spanish in the mother church's building. We have recently obtained approval for another daughter work in a suburb, to be conducted by our Spanish daughter work pastor. We also have two home Bible studies in nearby towns—one in English and one in Spanish. They have attracted a number of participants and have the potential to become <sup>220</sup>daughter works.

### PRIORITIES

Finally, as pastor I emphasize that *evangelism and discipleship should be the priorities for every department and every activity*. These two objectives form the core of our church's vision statement, which in turn is based on the great commission of Jesus (Matthew 28:19-20). Everything we do must be related to our vision statement, for it expresses the reason why we exist as a church.

Usually, it is easy to relate every function in some way to discipleship, because every activity promotes fellowship and development of believers. However, I teach that we should also consider evangelism to be part of every endeavor. Even when events have the primary purpose of discipleship, fellowship, or fundraising, we should keep evangelism in mind. For instance, a social event is a great opportunity to invite visitors, because it is easy for them to develop connections with the church in a relaxed setting. Thus, every social event must be planned and conducted with a diverse audience, including visitors, in mind. Even a fundraiser, such as a garage sale or harvest festival, is a great time to witness. A prayer meeting is a good time not only for saints to be strengthened but for a new person to receive the Holy Ghost.

Because of this emphasis on outreach, we have people in church today whose first contact with us was at a fundraiser or a social event. Some have received the Holy Ghost in prayer meetings or at the close of small group events. The heartbeat of a revival church must always be souls, and this emphasis must be part of every activity and every event.

## CONCLUSION

### **Attracting, Winning, and Retaining People**

*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:19).*

**I**n this book, we have discussed seven principles of apostolic church growth. Now let us put them together with a practical application.

For church growth to take place, we must be successful in three phases: (1) We must attract visitors. (2) We must convert a significant percentage of visitors through repentance, water baptism, and especially the baptism of the Holy Ghost. (3) We must retain a significant percentage of converts through discipleship. It is instructive to analyze how successful we are in each area; then we can seek means of improving our weaknesses.

From the beginning of our church, I noted information about our converts in the hope that we could discover factors that are effective in winning and retaining converts. Of course, each church, city, region, and country is different, so not everything here may be applicable or relevant to other churches, at least not to the same degree. Nevertheless, I hope that this information will provide fresh insight and encourage each church to analyze its own field of labor.

I have based the statistical observations in this chapter on those who received the Holy Ghost in our church over the first nine years, 1992 to 2000. I included backsliders from other places who were renewed in the Spirit at our church, but I excluded the converts in our jail ministry because almost all of them are still imprisoned or have moved out of our area upon release.



## ATTRACTING VISITORS

Here are the methods that we have employed successfully in attracting visitors who ultimately received the Holy Ghost, along with the percentage of total converts attributable to each method:

### Methods of Attracting Converts

1. Church sign. . . . .	1%
2. Internet.....	1
3. Newspaper and radio .....	1
4. Yellow Pages . . . . .	<u>7</u>
Subtotal for advertising	10%
5. Canvassing and street ministry .....	1
6. Nursing home ministry .....	1
7. Halfway house ministry (van pickup) . . . .	<u>3</u>
Subtotal for cold contacts	5
8. Referrals from UPCI churches .....	7
9. Family.....	44
10. Friends .....	<u>34</u>
Subtotal for personal relationship	<u>85</u> 100%

The first four methods represent various forms of *advertising*. Individually, they are small, but together they add up to a significant 10 percent. In addition, advertising can help in ways that these statistics do not fully reflect: (1) It serves a less tangible function of giving name recognition and credibility so that when someone is contacted by another method, he or she is more receptive. We have used direct mail for this purpose. While we have not yet traced any convert specifically to mail-outs, they have attracted visitors, <sup>235</sup>and they are helpful in raising visibility. (2) Advertising is particularly helpful for a church that has not yet developed other effective methods. Thus, in the first two years of our church, we attracted 38 percent of our converts through advertising. (3) It can reach one person who in turn reaches many friends and family members. (4) It reaches move- ins who already have the Holy Ghost. Our Yellow Pages advertisement has been particularly effective in this regard.

The next three methods represent *cold contacts*, including neighborhood canvassing, street meetings, and institutional ministries. Through them we have won 5 percent of

our converts. These methods can serve as inexpensive ways of advertising. At the outset of our church, we went from house to house conducting sixty-second surveys that asked people if they believed in God, miracles, healing, deliverance from addiction, the judgment, and the return of Jesus Christ. In a non-confrontational way, the survey gave us an opportunity to introduce our church, witness briefly, and offer a home Bible study. Other methods of outreach quickly became more productive, however, so we focused on them. Perhaps if we had canvassed more, we would have more results from this method; indeed, one of our daughter works has won several people through door knocking and street services for children. Even so, canvassing does not appear to be as effective as other methods, at least not in middle and upper-class neighborhoods in metropolitan areas. Nevertheless, we still occasionally conduct surveys and distribute door hangers near our church to increase our visibility and offer home Bible studies.

Ministries in nursing homes, retirement homes, jails, and halfway houses begin as cold contacts, but over time friendships can form that lead to greater success in conversion. However, only a few converts from institutional ministries will ever be candidates for active membership in the mother church. Of course, reaching people in institutions is a worthy goal in itself. We have seen about 250 people receive the Holy Ghost through jail ministry, but only a very few have been released, have stayed in our area, and have become part of our local assembly.

The last three methods—using preexisting *personal relationships*—are responsible for the vast majority of our converts—85 percent! A referral means that another United Pentecostal pastor or member recommended that someone visit our church or asked us to contact someone. The number of converts from referrals—7 percent—represents one of the benefits of belonging to an international organization with years of ministry, geographical breadth, and name recognition. Referrals from other United Pentecostal churches have also helped us receive move-ins who already have the Holy Ghost.

The importance of personal relationships for soulwinning should not surprise us, for this method is apostolic. Repeatedly in the New Testament, believers evangelized their relatives and friends. For instance, Cornelius “called together his relatives and close friends” to hear the preaching of Peter, and they all received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:24, 44). An ancient household (Greek, *oikos*) typically consisted of an extended family and

sometimes servants. Often the entire household was converted (Acts 16:14- 15, 31-34; 18:8). Moreover, the apostles ministered from house to house, from family to family (Acts 5:42; 20:20).

We have tried to maintain a balanced, diversified approach that would appeal to people of various ages and backgrounds. We had to establish a base first, but once we did, we were able to increase our growth by consciously targeting different groups. For instance, I am white and English-speaking, as is the majority of the population in our area, so it is not surprising that most of our converts have been also. At every opportunity, however, we have tried to reach other racial and ethnic groups and make them feel welcome. We conduct services in Spanish, offer Sunday school classes in Korean and Tagalog (Filipino language), give Bible studies in Vietnamese, and provide interpretation for the deaf. As a result, our congregation currently includes people from thirteen nations.

Here is a breakdown of our congregation's ethnicity compared to that of our metropolitan area, as determined by the U.S. Census Bureau:

<b>Ethnicity of Regular Attendees</b>		
<b>Census Categories</b>	<b>General Population</b>	<b>New Life Church</b>
White Non-Hispanic	62%	62%
White Hispanic	24	25
Black	10	8
Asian, Pacific, Native American.	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
	100%	100%

As another example, in the first four years we had relatively few young married couples. After we built our own building, we finally had enough space to begin a Sunday school class for young married people, and we targeted this group. Today it is the largest group in our church.

Here are breakdowns of our converts by ethnicity and age:

### **Ethnicity of Converts**

White Non-Hispanic . . . . .	59%
White Hispanic.....	30
Black .....	7
Asian . . . . .	4
	100%

### **Age of Converts**

Children (under 12) . . . . .	14%
Youth (12-17).....	22
Young singles (18-39).....	22
Young marrieds (18-39).....	26
Midlife (40-64).....	12
Seniors (65 and over) . . . . .	4
	100%

George Barna, a nationally known religious pollster and statistical researcher, recently concluded that most people convert to Christianity as children. He therefore recommended that churches gear most evangelism to children, while focusing other activities such as youth programs on retention instead of evangelism. Obviously, he interpreted his finding as indicative of human nature. Our experience, however, indicates that he simply discovered a weakness in denominational churches. Perhaps they could be more effective in reaching teens and adults if they tried a different approach (or had a more biblical message and experience!).

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This example illustrates that statistics do not tell the whole story. They must be interpreted. They may reveal areas of greater and lesser productivity, thereby indicating how we should allocate our efforts and resources. Or they may reveal areas of weakness, thereby indicating where we should try harder. In most cases, the proper approach is probably to shift more resources to areas of proven productivity, while also experimenting with new approaches in areas of weakness.

The main lessons I have drawn concerning outreach are as follows:

1. *We should employ a variety of methods to contact people.* Even less productive methods add up!
2. *Belonging to an organization provides tangible benefits.*
3. *By far the most effective methods of evangelism are those that rely on preexisting personal relationships.* The key is to inspire, equip, and mobilize each member for personal evangelism among family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. Not only does personal evangelism generate most of our converts, but as we shall soon discuss, there is a greater retention rate for converts won in this way.
4. *We can grow in several areas if we will target various groups through focused prayer, attention, and planning.*
5. *In sum, we should emphasize our strengths but diversify our methods.*

## WINNING CONVERTS

Visitors are prime candidates for conversion. Most do not get baptized or receive the Holy Ghost on their first visit, but after several visits the likelihood increases greatly. Therefore, it is important to contact them in several ways, to remain in contact with them over time, and to encourage them to return. (See chapter 6 and appendix C.)

Many churches have found the personal Bible study to be an effective way of sharing the gospel. We did not discuss it under the heading “Attracting Visitors” because it still requires a prior method of contacting people and getting them interested (although it is often used before they actually visit a church service). Instead, we consider it as a tool to prepare visitors and other interested persons for conversion. Our church has used several Bible studies in different ways—at home, on the job, at church, and on video. (See chapter 4.) No single tool is our primary instrument of outreach, but Bible studies have played a significant role, particularly for those who already have a connection with someone in church.

Since conversion ultimately involves receiving the Holy Ghost, let us discuss how people attain this experience. Here is how our converts have been filled with the Holy Spirit:

### Methods of Receiving the Spirit

1. Rally, camp, conference . . . . .	13%
2. Home, car, work.....	5
3. Special speaker.....	35
4. Regular church service . . . . .	<u>.47</u>
	100%

With the first category, we see another significant benefit of belonging to a fellowship that sponsors camp meetings, youth camps, youth rallies, men's conferences, women's conferences, and so on. Our converts have received the Holy Ghost at each of these kinds of meetings. Especially when our church was new and small, such meetings were a significant means of winning converts, and they still remain important to us— both for winning and retaining converts.

The second category stems primarily from an emphasis on personal evangelism. When lay members witness and teach Bible studies in homes and offices, some people will receive the Holy Ghost in these settings. An emphasis on faith will also encourage repentant seekers to receive the Holy Ghost anywhere, anytime. Our converts have received the Holy Spirit at home prayer meetings and Bible studies, on the church bus returning from youth conference, in a van coming from women's conference, in an office at work after a Bible study, in the ladies' restroom at work, and in a motel room at men's conference.

Revival services and other services that feature special speakers provide important opportunities for people to receive the Holy Ghost. Although these services can be expensive, especially for a small church, the investment is necessary and worthwhile. Special services <sup>240</sup>attract visitors, encourage members to invite family and friends, create expectancy, inject fresh zeal, provide new insight, and inspire faith. At key times in the life of our church, an evangelist has helped us achieve a spiritual breakthrough or move into a higher dimension.

Ultimately, the most effective way to turn visitors into converts is for a revival spirit to permeate the regular services of the church. Over time—and it can seem like a long time—a church can develop such an atmosphere through persistent prayer, heartfelt worship, positive faith preaching, sound doctrinal teaching, love for people, and sensitivity to the move of the Spirit. When people have confidence that every

service will be visitor-friendly, positive, uplifting, and spiritual, they will invite people to come. As our church has matured, the greatest number of converts have received the Holy Ghost in our regular services.

Here are my primary conclusions with regard to making converts:

1. *It is important to follow up visitors, for they are our best prospects.*
2. *Home Bible studies can be very effective in preparing people for conversion, especially those who are already connected to the church through a personal relationship.*
3. *Both organization-sponsored meetings and special services at the local church are valuable means of promoting conversions and revival.*
4. *In the long run, the best tool for bringing people to the new birth experience is through regular church services that emphasize worship, anointed preaching, evangelistic appeals, prayer, and the move of the Holy Spirit.*

## **RETAINING CONVERTS**

Retaining converts is a challenge, especially in our transient, unstable, uncommitted, post-Christian, amoral society. Converts not only have to learn biblical principles and values in order to become established, but many also have to learn basic life skills and principles of faithfulness and diligence in all aspects of life. Just to survive spiritually, many need immediate teaching on finances, work, relationships, marriage, and family. Informal conversations with fellow pastors reveal that it is common to retain only 10 to 20 percent of converts. According to Jesus' parable of the sower, even in the best of circumstances a significant number of converts will not persevere to the point of fruitfulness. (See Luke 8:4-15.)

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Of the total who have received the Holy Ghost in our church, about 25 percent are not prospects for long-term membership: They visited from out of town, visited from neighboring United Pentecostal or other apostolic churches, soon moved out of town, or in a few cases, soon died. The following discussion and statistics relate to the remaining 75 percent.

As noted in chapter 7, we seek to integrate converts as soon as possible by connecting them to our church in three ways: (1) *age groups*, (2) *geographical groups* (care groups),

and (3) *interest groups*. Our goal is for everyone who regularly attends our church to be involved in some activity or ministry. In this way, they take ownership of the church, feel part of it, and make friends in the church, thereby greatly lessening the chance that they will drop out.

As discussed in chapter 6, we give each new convert or move-in an *orientation packet* that contains a directory of members and information about our departments, activities, and staff. Every other month, we conduct an *orientation class* for all converts and move-ins. We encourage all converts to enroll in a *home Bible study* if they have not already done so. Finally, we urge them to enroll in our *discipleship class*—a small group where they learn principles for Christian living, with plenty of time for discussion and questions.

In the short-term (one year or less) we retain 75 to 80 percent of our converts by these methods. Over the long term (two or more years) we retain 50 to 60 percent. Overall, our retention rate for nine years stands at 55 percent. (That is 55 percent of the roughly 75 percent active prospects, or about 40 to 45 percent of the grand total who have received the Holy Ghost in our church.)

We have discovered two other important statistics, however. *First, personal relationships (family, friends, and referrals) lead to a significantly greater retention rate than other methods.* The reason is that the new convert already has a significant connection to the church. Here are our results in this regard:

Winning and Retention of Converts		
Method of Contact	Converts Won as %	Converts Retained as %
	of Total Converts of Total Retained	
Advertising	10%	4%
Cold Contacts	5	4
Personal Relationships	<u>85</u>	<u>92</u>
	100%	100%



### Retention of Converts By Method of Contact

Method of Contact	Retention Rate
Advertising . . . . .	20%
Cold Contacts . . . . .	46%
Personal Relationships. . . . .	60%
Overall Retention Rate . . . . .	55%

*Second, if converts will commit themselves to three specific involvements:*

- (1) Sunday school,*
- (2) midweek Bible study, and*
- (3) discipleship class—the retention rate rises to about 90 percent!*

Based on this track record, we assure converts that if they will be faithful in these three areas (in addition to Sunday worship services), then they will be able to preserve their new experience with God and sustain their new spiritual life. For children, the key factor is usually parental involvement. For teens, commitment to youth service serves as the equivalent of a discipleship class, although we have recently started a youth discipleship program.

When I announce a new discipleship class, I often say, “As a new convert, do you like what God has done in your life? Do you want to make your new life a permanent reality? Well, statistically, you have about a 50-percent chance of making it. But if you will make three commitments, you have a 90-percent chance. We can practically guarantee success if you will<sup>238</sup> follow this advice.” Since our overall retention rate is about 55 percent, including those who make these commitments, the retention rate for those who do not is actually much less, about 30 percent. Here are the results in table form:

### Retention of Converts by Commitments

Level of Commitment	Retention Rate
Three Discipleship Commitments . . . . .	90%
Not Three Discipleship Commitments . . . . .	30%
Overall Retention Rate . . . . .	55%

In sum, I have concluded that the following steps will significantly increase the long-term retention of converts:

1. *Motivate and train members to evangelize through preexisting personal relationships.* Most of the church's outreach program, including time and budget, should be devoted to the evangelism of relatives and friends.

2. *Connect, disciple, and involve new converts in multiple ways as soon as possible.*

### **A FAITHFUL STEWARD**

*Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful* (I Corinthians 4:2).

I hope this book has confirmed many ideas and presented many new ideas. If it has, the information may seem overwhelming, but it can be implemented one step at a time. The best approach for change is to identify one principle in which the need for change is the greatest, and work on the practical implementation of that principle. When significant improvement has taken place, then another principle can be tackled. Step by step, principles can be enacted and programs can be added or enhanced until a churchwide transformation takes place.

Ultimately, we cannot judge our success by numbers or buildings. We plant and water, but it is God who gives the increase. Many small churches have contributed to the kingdom of God far more than their numbers might suggest—by giving to missions, by sending laborers into the harvest field, and by converting and discipling many people who moved to other areas. In addition, some fields of labor contain special challenges, but the universal church benefits by having outposts in these difficult areas.

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In short, instead of comparing ourselves by ourselves and among ourselves, we need definite direction from God and a fresh vision of His will for our lives and ministries. Then we need to understand clearly our role as stewards of the gospel and of the people whom God leads to us. We will one day give account of our stewardship to God Himself. He will not measure our success by the cost of our building or the size of our attendance, but He will judge whether we have remained true to the apostolic message and whether we have ministered to people with love, a burden, and a servant's heart. The question will be whether we have been faithful to His call, His gospel, His church, and His people.

If we will pursue seven apostolic principles in our ministry—prayer, planning, persistence, preaching and teaching, power of the Spirit, personal care, and personal involvement—we can successfully fulfill our stewardship. In the process, our church will grow “with the increase that is from God” (Colossians 2:19).

In the end, we will receive the ultimate reward for which we have been striving—to hear our Master say, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matthew 25:21). Let us work while it is day, so that we may hear Him say, “Well done!”

## APPENDIX A

### ORGANIZING A CHURCH LEGALLY

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**W**hen a new church is planted, it is important for it to be organized legally. The following minutes are a sample of what should be done. The underlined wording will vary depending on the individual situation. Bracketed wording is optional and may also vary with the situation.

Much of this material can also be used by existing churches as resolutions.

Please note that these minutes are only a sample. They contain general information, but not every provision may apply in every state or to every situation. They are not intended to provide legal advice. For specific advice, please contact an attorney in your state. Moreover, these minutes do not contain everything that is necessary. In particular, the articles of incorporation, the bylaws, and the application for affiliation with the UPCI all need to be prepared as separate documents from these minutes.

For further discussion of legal, compensation, and tax issues, see the following resources. For the latest editions of these books, call 1-704-821-3845 or go to [www.iclonline.com](http://www.iclonline.com).

1. Hammar, Richard. *Pastor, Church and Law*, 3rd ed. Matthews, NC: Christian Ministry Resources, 1999.
2. Hammar, Richard. *Church & Clergy Tax Guide*, 2001 ed. Matthews, NC: Christian Ministry Resources, 2000.
3. Cobble, James F., Jr., and Richard R. Hammar. *The 2001 Compensation Handbook for Church Staff*. Matthews, NC: Christian Ministry Resources, 2000.

## MINUTES OF ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

### First United Pentecostal Church of Anytown, Inc.

January 11, 2002

#### 1. Call and Notice of Meeting

These are the minutes of the organizational meeting of First United Pentecostal Church of Anytown, Inc. (referred to as the “church”), a Texas nonprofit corporation. This meeting was held at 100 Main Street, Anytown, Texas, on January 11, 2002, at 7:30 Pm. This meeting was called by Pastor, the incorporator named in the articles of incorporation. Notice of the time and place of this meeting was communicated by telephone and mailed on December 11, 2001, to each church board member named in the articles of incorporation.

#### 2. Attendance and Quorum

Pastor and Presbyter were present at this meeting in person. These persons are named as board members (directors) of the church in the articles of incorporation, and their attendance constituted a quorum. District Home Missions Director, the only other board member of the church, attended the meeting by proxy. Also present at the meeting were Pastor’s Wife and Other Persons. The foregoing persons constitute the initial membership of the church, and a quorum.

#### 3. Chair and Secretary

On a motion duly made and seconded, [by unanimous vote,] Presbyter was elected to act as chair of the meeting and Other Person was elected to act as secretary of the meeting. Both persons accepted the election and acted in their respective capacities.

#### 4. Articles of Incorporation

A document of <sup>242</sup>five pages entitled “Articles of Incorporation of First United Pentecostal Church of Anytown, Inc.” was presented. After discussion, on a motion duly made and seconded, [by a unanimous vote,] the church board and membership:

*Resolved*, that the articles of incorporation presented to and considered at this meeting be adopted as the Articles of Incorporation of First United Pentecostal Church of Anytown, Inc.

#### 5. Bylaws

A document of seven pages entitled “Bylaws of First United Pentecostal Church of Anytown, Inc.” was presented. After discussion, on a motion duly made and

seconded, [by a unanimous vote,] the church board and membership:

*Resolved*, that the bylaws presented to and considered at this meeting be adopted as the Bylaws of First United Pentecostal Church of Anytown, Inc. The secretary is directed to certify a copy of the bylaws and insert them in the minute book of the church. The secretary is directed to certify another copy of the bylaws and maintain them in the principal office of the church. [Alternate: *Resolved*, that the church adopt as its bylaws the Local Church Government in the current *Manual* of the United Pentecostal Church International, as it may be amended from time to time.]

## **6. Affiliation**

On a motion duly made and seconded, [by a unanimous vote,] the church board and membership:

*Resolved*, that the church affiliate with the United Pentecostal Church International, headquartered in Hazelwood, Missouri.

## **7. Officers**

Pursuant to the bylaws, the church board [unanimously] chose Pastor as the founding pastor. The church membership [unanimously] endorsed this choice.

The pastor then appointed the following individuals to serve as members of the church board for a term of one year: Pastor, Presbyter, and District Home Missions Director. The church membership [unanimously] endorsed each appointment.

The pastor then appointed Other Person as secretary-treasurer for a term of one year. The church membership [unanimously] endorsed this appointment.

## **8.2 Bank Account**

On a motion duly made and seconded, [by a unanimous vote,] the church board:

*Resolved*, that the church establish in its name one or more accounts with First Bank in Anytown, Texas, and adopt the resolutions required by the bank, which are stated on its signature card. The pastor and treasurer are authorized to establish accounts for the church. The pastor and treasurer are authorized to withdraw funds of the church from the church's accounts by signing checks or other instruments. First Bank is authorized to honor and pay any and all checks and other instruments so signed, including those drawn to the individual order of any officer or other person authorized to sign the check or other instrument.

**9. Organizational Expenses**

On a motion duly made and seconded, [by a unanimous vote,] the church board:

*Resolved*, that the treasurer be directed to pay the expenses of incorporation and organization of the church.

**10. Compensation of Pastor**

On a motion duly made and seconded, [by a unanimous vote,] the church board:

*Resolved*, that the compensation paid to the pastor for the calendar year 2002 shall be seventy-five percent of the tithing received by the church, up to a maximum of \$85,000. This designation shall apply to all future years unless otherwise provided.

[*Alternate or additional: Resolved*, that the following goal be set for the pastor's total annual compensation (salary, housing, insurance, retirement): \$40,000.00, plus or minus \$5,000.00. It is understood that the church will not be able to pay this amount at present, but the pastor's compensation will be increased gradually to meet this goal as the budget permits. In the meantime, the compensation may be set below or within this range by mutual agreement of the pastor and treasurer. However, any increase must be included within the annual budget that is approved by the church board.]

The pastor shall retain the copyright on all books and papers that he writes, and he shall have full rights to all royalties from the sale of his books and papers.

**11. Housing Allowance for Pastor**

On a motion duly made and seconded, [by a unanimous vote,] the church board:

*Resolved*, that ~~that~~ the pastor's compensation, \$20,000 is hereby designated to be a housing allowance pursuant to section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code. This designation shall apply to calendar year 2002 and all future years unless otherwise provided.

**12. Nontaxable Benefits for Pastor and Other Full-time Employees**

On a motion duly made and seconded, [by a unanimous vote,] the church board:

*Resolved*, that in addition to the foregoing compensation, the church will provide the following nontaxable fringe benefits to full-time employees, when the pastor and treasurer jointly determine that such action is desirable and financially feasible and when

the necessary funds are included in the annual budget approved by the church board. For the purpose of these benefits, the pastor is deemed to be a full-time employee, even if he has other sources of income. When the church is ready to add a full-time employee other than the pastor, the church board will review this policy and seek professional advice to ensure that the church provides and administers these benefits in a nontaxable way.

a. *Medical insurance.* Payment of medical insurance premiums on behalf of the employee and his family, for a policy or policies to be approved by the pastor and treasurer. To qualify, the employee must not be covered by other medical insurance, such as through a retirement plan, other employment, or a spouse.

b. *Medical cost reimbursement plan.* Reimbursement of all medical costs incurred by the employee and his family that are not covered by insurance. Such reimbursement shall be for the type of medical expenses that a medical insurance policy would ordinarily cover, except for rules regarding deductibles, co-payments, and cost caps. The reimbursement may cover doctor's bills, hospital bills, prescriptions, vision care, and dental care for the employee and his dependents. The maximum reimbursement allowed each year shall be \$3,000. After the church has been in existence for five years, for an employee to qualify, he must have been employed full time for three consecutive years. It is the employee's responsibility to submit medical expenses to the church for reimbursement.

c. *Retirement Payments.* Payments to a tax- deferred, qualified retirement plan, equal to ten percent of salary.

d. *Group term life insurance.* The purchase of up to \$50,000 of group term life insurance, or the maximum allowed as nontaxable by the Internal Revenue Service.

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### **13. Accountable Expense Reimbursement Policy**

On a motion duly made and seconded, [by a unanimous vote,] the church board adopted the following accountable expense reimbursement policy:

*Resolved*, that First United Pentecostal Church of Anytown, Inc. hereby adopt a reimbursement policy pursuant to income tax regulations 1.162- 17 and 1.274-5 (e), upon the following terms and conditions:

1. Any ministerial employee of the church will be reimbursed for any ordinary and necessary business and professional expense incurred on behalf of the church, if the following conditions are satisfied:



(a) the expenses are reasonable in amount; (b) the minister documents the amount, time, place, business purpose, and business relationship of each such expense with the same kinds of documentary evidence as would be required to support a deduction of the expense on the minister's federal income tax return; and (c) the minister documents such expenses by providing the church treasurer with an accounting of such expenses, no less frequently than monthly. In no event will an expense be reimbursed if substantiated more than 60 days after the expense is paid or incurred by a minister.

2. The church will not include in a minister's W-2 form the amount of any business or professional expense properly substantiated and reimbursed according to the preceding paragraph, and the minister should not report the amount of any such reimbursement as income on his Form 1040.

3. Any church reimbursement that exceeds the amount of business or professional expenses properly accounted for by a minister pursuant to this reimbursement policy must be returned to the church within 120 days after the associated expenses are paid or incurred by the minister, and shall not be retained by the minister.

4. If, for any reason, the church's reimbursements are less than the amount of business and professional expenses properly substantiated by a minister, the church will report no part of the reimbursements on the minister's W-2 form, and the minister may deduct the unreimbursed expenses as allowed by law.

5. Under no circumstances will the church reimburse a minister for business or professional expenses incurred on behalf of the church that are not properly substantiated according to this policy. Church and staff understand that this requirement is necessary to prevent the reimbursement plan from being classified as a "nonaccountable" plan.

6. The minister shall retain all receipts and other documentary evidence to substantiate the business nature and amount of his business and professional expenses incurred on behalf of the church. The church may make copies of such evidence.

7. The church will reimburse business use of a car at the standard mileage rate currently allowed by the Internal Revenue Service.

8. This accountable expense reimbursement plan extends to non-ministerial

employees and volunteer workers whom the pastor designates. Their expenditures are subject to advance approval by the pastor.

#### **14. No Compensation for Board Members**

On a motion duly made and seconded, [by a unanimous vote,] the church board:

*Resolved*, that no church board member, including the pastor, has received or shall receive any compensation for his duties as a church board member.

#### **15. Adjournment**

On a motion duly made and seconded, [by a unanimous vote,] the church board and membership voted to adjourn the meeting.

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Other Person, Secretary Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_

Presbyter, Chair

### **NOTES ON THE PASTOR'S COMPENSATION, BENEFITS, AND EXPENSES**

Under the plan proposed in the foregoing resolutions, the pastor's compensation would be 75 percent of the tithing. The remaining 25 percent would be available for nontaxable benefits and ministerial expenses. If the pastor does not receive full benefits (such as insurance and retirement) from other employment, then the compensation percentage can be lowered so that more of the tithing is available to pay for nontaxable benefits. To minimize taxes, it is better to receive all the nontaxable benefits possible before receiving taxable income.

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As the church's income increases significantly, the pastor's compensation percentage will need to be reduced, or else converted to a flat salary. The church board or a special committee can research the typical compensation given to ministers in the United States and Canada and recommend a salary or salary range as in the alternate resolution. (See *The 2001 Compensation Handbook for Church Staff*.)

The amount designated as housing allowance does not increase the pastor's compensation. It simply reclassifies compensation in accordance with tax law to provide an additional benefit to the pastor at no extra cost to the church. The actual income may

be less than the designated housing allowance, and actual housing expenses may be less than the allowance (in which case the pastor can only claim actual expenses). However, the housing allowance should be set high enough to cover the maximum housing expenses that the pastor might incur in a given year, including down payment, mortgage payments (principal and interest), taxes, insurance, utilities, maintenance, furnishings, household supplies, and rent. The church board should pass the housing allowance before the end of the year for the upcoming year.

In addition to reimbursing the pastor for ministerial expenses, the church can also pay bills that he incurs on behalf of the church. The pastor can also charge ministerial expenses to a church credit card used solely for that purpose, and the church can pay the monthly bill. Here are examples of expenses that the church can pay or reimburse: mileage for church business travel, books and periodicals for ministerial research, ministerial tithes and budget fees (which are required professional dues), entertainment of counselees and church guests, purchase of supplies for the church, expenses of attending church conferences and seminars, and long-distance telephone charges for church-related calls.

An automobile allowance that is not subject to an accountable expense reimbursement policy must be treated as salary. If the pastor operates an automobile owned by the church, then he must reimburse the church for personal mileage, which includes commuting from home to church.

## APPENDIX B

### GUIDELINES FOR LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC MINISTRY

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**A**s church leaders and people involved in public ministry, we must have a special dedication so that God can guide and use us as He wills. We need to be good examples and witnesses to fellow church members, to visitors, and to other churches. We do not want to put any stumbling block in people's way that would hinder them from being blessed by our ministry.

In order to fulfill this purpose, our church has established guidelines for people in leadership and public ministry roles. These include the leadership team (which includes department heads), the church board, emcees, the choir, special singers, musicians, ushers, greeters, Sunday school teachers, children's church teachers, and other roles designated by the pastor.

Adhering to these guidelines does not guarantee that a person is saved, nor does failing to fulfill them necessarily cause a person to be lost. People who do not meet these criteria are still welcome to be part of our fellowship and to find other avenues of worship and service in our local assembly. The basic guidelines are as follows:

1. Personal faith in Jesus Christ, repentance from sin, water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
2. Age thirteen<sup>249</sup> or older.
3. Conducting oneself everywhere in a manner becoming to a Christian, including morality, honesty, and integrity in every area of life.
4. Endeavoring to manifest brotherly love and fellowship toward all of God's people.
5. Attending worship services and informing the pastor in case of absence.
6. Supporting the work of the assembly with prayer, tithes, and offerings as God enables.
7. Adhering to and practicing the holiness teachings of the local church.

With regard to holiness of life, it is important to understand that holiness is both inward and outward. Holiness must come from God, and it must come from within a person. We cannot make ourselves holy by adhering to a list of rules. For the sake of public ministry, however, we ask that each member pledge to live by the following guidelines regarding outward appearance and conduct. These standards are based on scriptural principles, and some are specifically for the sake of presenting an appearance appropriate to the occasion. (For specific scriptural teachings, see Deuteronomy 22:5; Psalm 101:2-3; Jeremiah 4:30; I Corinthians 3:17; 6:19-20; 11:1-16; I Timothy 2:9-10; I Peter 3:3-4.)

1. Dress modestly at all times and in a manner appropriate to your sex. Ladies should wear dresses or skirts that cover the knee, and men should wear pants. Sleeves should cover the upper arm. Avoid low necklines, extremely thin or tight clothing, and extravagant, showy, or extremely costly clothing.
2. Ladies should not cut their hair. Men should cut their hair short. Hair should be arranged or combed neatly. Avoid extravagant, showy, or wild hairstyles.
3. Do not wear ornamental jewelry.
4. Do not use colored makeup or hair dye.
5. Do not drink alcoholic beverages, use tobacco, use illegal drugs, or abuse legal drugs.
6. Do not attend movie theaters. If you are the head of a household and your spouse is in the church, we ask that you do not have a television in your home. If you use a video monitor, we ask that you adjust it so that it does not receive television channels. In all use of video equipment, computers, the Internet, or other technology, you should only allow yourself to view things that are consistent with family and Christian values. Generally, videos rated PG are *not* consistent with family and Christian values.

*Note: The rapid changes in technology and the merging of various technologies may soon make a simple prohibition against television obsolete. Nevertheless, it is important to issue clear warnings in this area and to instill godly principles in the heart.*

## APPENDIX C

### VISITOR FOLLOW-UP STRATEGY

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#### FIRST-TIME VISITORS

*Note: In the following process, depending on the size and organization of the local church, the outreach director, the assistant pastor, or the pastor may serve as the visitor follow-up coordinator.*

1. A host or hostess gives the visitor a visitor's card, a pen, and a brochure about the church. The information sought includes name, address, telephone number, who invited, and date of visit. The remaining steps are taken based on this information, unless the visitor is from out of town or from another United Pentecostal Church.
2. The pastor sends a letter within one week (prepared by secretary).
3. The secretary places the person's information in the church database as a visitor, thereby placing the person on a mailing list.
4. The visitor follow-up coordinator calls within one week and reports to the pastor. The call
  - (a) thanks the person for coming, (b) mentions home Bible studies, and (c) attempts to schedule a time for the visitation team to drop by with a gift and an information packet. (Scheduling visits depends upon the cultural conditions and expectations in the area, the availability of volunteers, and the receptivity of visitors.)
5. If feasible, <sup>251</sup>a visitation team visits within two weeks and reports to the pastor. The visitor follow-up coordinator and the care group director work together to select the visitation team and implement this policy.
6. The Sunday school class superintendent arranges to contact (all but adult class).
7. Visitors continue to receive information about special events: (a) mail-outs approximately every two months and (b) telephone calls approximately every six months.

#### FURTHER FOLLOW-UP OF VISITORS

1. The visitor follow-up coordinator, Sunday school class superintendent, and leader

- of the age-based fellowship group arrange for additional follow-up as needed.
2. On second visit to church: Pastor sends second letter, prepared by secretary.
  3. The visitor follow-up coordinator arranges for calls to all visitors for special occasions, about twice a year. Callers report result to him, and he reports the results to the pastor.
  4. The church sends flyers or letters about special events about once every two months.
  5. If the visitor does not return within a year or two, or if the telephone number is disconnected, the pastor or assistant pastor sends a letter asking if the flyers are being received and if the person wishes to remain on the mailing list. If there is no response, the contact information is removed from the active category.
  6. If visitors attend service for three weeks in close proximity or state that they plan to attend regularly, then they are added to the database as a regular attendee, or “regular.” This designation is not equivalent to legal membership or the new birth experience, but it is based on attendance.

### **FOLLOW-UP OF REGULARS**

When people are designated as regulars, they are treated as part of the church family and the following steps are taken:

1. They are assigned to a care group based on their geographical location, and the care group leader begins to follow up with them.
2. They receive a newcomers packet, which contains a list of names and addresses of church people, a list of the church staff including departmental directors and volunteer coordinators, information on home Bible studies, and information on the discipleship class.
3. They are invited to attend the next quarterly potluck dinner for newcomers.
4. They are invited to the *Introduction to New Life* class, which is a one-night class conducted every two months during midweek service. At this class, they receive a brief introduction to our local church’s history, staff, beliefs, programs, and activities; and they take a tour of the building.
5. Their picture is taken and posted on a bulletin board reserved for newcomers and care group leaders.
6. If they miss church on Sunday, they receive a bulletin in the mail. If the reason for their absence is unknown, the pastor or assistant pastor calls to check on them.

7. After they have attended for a while, the pastor, in conjunction with departmental directors and activity coordinators, seeks a place of active involvement for them that is compatible with their interests, abilities, and qualifications.

### SAMPLE TELEPHONE CALL

1. "Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_ from New Life Church."
2. "Pastor Bernard asked me you give you a call and tell you [once again] that we appreciate your visiting our church."
3. "We would like to invite you to visit us again soon." [Provide information about any special services coming up soon, especially if this is a later follow-up call.]
4. "Do you have any prayer requests for our prayer team?"
5. "Our church offers free home Bible studies. Would you like more information?" [If inter-ested:] "I'll ask the coordinator to contact you."
6. [At initial call:] "We would like to schedule someone to stop by your home for a few min- utes to drop off a small gift and an information packet. Would\_\_evening about \_\_\_\_ be a good time?"

### SAMPLE VISIT

1. "Hello. I am \_\_\_\_\_ from New Life Church. Pastor Bernard asked me to drop by and give you this gift and an information packet about our church." [Suggested gift: a loaf of bread from a bakery. Suggested information packet:
  - (1) *Biblical Experience of Salvation* or another tract on salvation;
  - (2) information on a Bible study such as *Exploring God's Word* or *Into His Marvelous Light*;
  - (3) a list of CARE tracts, which are tracts on various practical subjects such as discipline of <sup>752</sup>children, finances, caring for seniors, and so on. The team should have a selection of these tracts available, if the person wants one or more at the time. The team also takes a church brochure in case the person did not receive one at church. If the person is not home, the team leaves the packet in an attractive CARE plastic hanger with a personal note similar to the above. The above supplies are available from the UPCI.]
2. "We want you to know that our church is here to help you in any way that we can. Do you have any prayer requests for our prayer team? Would you like to meet with our pastor?"
3. "We offer free home Bible studies. Would you like our coordinator to call you



about having one?”

4. “Before we leave, we would like to pray for God’s blessings upon your home. Would that be all right?”
5. Make your visit brief, unless the person shows unusual desire.

## A P P E N D I X    D

### JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR CHURCH GROWTH PERSONNEL

#### 1. OUTREACH DIRECTOR

**Reports to:** Pastor

**Term:** One year

**Qualifications**

1. The outreach director must be a regular attendee for a minimum of six months at the local church or another United Pentecostal Church from which he has received a transfer and recommendation.
2. The outreach director must uphold and support the Guidelines for Leadership and Public Ministry.
3. The outreach director must demonstrate basic leadership skills, communication skills, problem-solving skills, and organizational skills.
4. The outreach director must have a good understanding of basic Bible doctrines including the Godhead, salvation, holiness, stewardship, spiritual gifts, and interpersonal relationships.
5. The outreach director must demonstrate a sincere burden for lost souls.
6. The outreach director must have experience in personal evangelism.
7. The outreach director must be approved by the pastor.

**Responsibilities.** The outreach director is responsible for maintaining the various outreaches of the church that have not become their own department, including but not limited to A.C.T.S. and Christian AA, college campus, deaf, home Bible study, jail, nursing home, outreaches to other language groups, and visitor follow-up. The goal is for each outreach to have its own coordinator. The director should also explore new avenues of outreach.

1. Promote personal evangelism within the church.

2. Schedule, staff, and coordinate various out- reach endeavors with the assistance of the various coordinators.
3. Keep a current teacher/speaker schedule on file for all outreach services and meetings. These schedules can be created and main- tained by the various coordinators.
4. Provide adequate training for the various out- reaches including home Bible study training, altar worker instruction, jail worker orienta- tion and certification, A.C.T.S. teacher and volunteer training and certification, and other training as necessary.
5. Provide assistance and guidance to the vari- ous outreach coordinators.
6. Communicate frequently with the pastor, informing him of the progress of each out- reach. Scheduled events, problem areas, successes, and new ideas should also be discussed with the pastor.
7. Obtain the pastor's approval for all activities.
8. Obtain the pastor's approval for all new staff members.
9. Organize and supervise a team to visit first- time visitors. Assign visits weekly, and go on visits with team members as needed. Ideally, team members should visit in twos.
10. Plan outreach visitation on Saturday in the vicinity of the church. Goal: once a month.
11. Through the above means, attempt to sched- ule Bible studies with visitors and contacts, in conjunction with the home Bible study coordinator. Be available to teach personally.

*Note: To implement this job description fully, the outreach director should be full time. If he is not, then the pastor or assistant pastor will need to assume some of these responsibilities, while relying extensively on volunteer coordinators.*

## **2. DISCIPLESHIP DIRECTOR**

**Reports to:** Pastor

**Term:** One year

### **Qualifications**

1. The discipleship director must be a regular attendee for a minimum of six months at the local church or another United Pentecostal Church from which he

has received a transfer and recommendation.

2. The discipleship director must uphold and support the Guidelines for Leadership and Public Ministry.
3. The discipleship director must demonstrate basic leadership skills, communication skills, problem-solving skills, and organizational skills.
4. The discipleship director must have teaching experience.
5. The discipleship director must have a good understanding of basic Bible doctrines including the Godhead, salvation, holiness, stewardship, spiritual gifts, and interpersonal relationships.
6. The discipleship director must be approved by the pastor.

**Responsibilities.** The discipleship director is responsible for helping converts reach a higher level of spiritual maturity and biblical proficiency. The coordinator should strive to integrate new converts into the existing structure of the church and its various outreaches and ministries.

1. Teach a discipleship class using *In My Father's House* or another curriculum approved by the pastor, and submit a weekly attendance report to the pastor. The pastor or assistant pastor should be scheduled to teach occasionally.
2. Enroll new converts in *Exploring God's Word* by a class, video, or home Bible study. (This can be arranged with the outreach director or home Bible study coordinator.)
3. Supply literature to new converts as needed, particularly *Essentials of the New Birth*, *Essential Doctrines of the Bible*, *Essentials of Holiness*, and *In Search of Holiness*.
4. Give personal care to new converts as needed. Significant issues should be communicated to the pastor. Serious issues (e.g., marital issues, relocation, serious conflicts) should be referred to the pastor.
5. Develop a system of accountability in which new converts are paired with seasoned saints for mentoring.
6. Communicate frequently with the pastor, informing him of the progress of each student and the class overall. Scheduled events, problem areas, successes, and new ideas should also be discussed with the pastor.
7. Obtain the pastor's approval for all activities.

### **3. CARE GROUP DIRECTOR**

**Reports to:** Pastor

**Term:** One year

#### **Qualifications**

1. The care group director must be a regular attendee for a minimum of six months at the local church or another United Pentecostal Church from which he or she has received a transfer and recommendation.
2. The care group director must uphold and support the Guidelines for Leadership and Public Ministry.
3. The care group director must demonstrate basic leadership skills, communication skills, and problem-solving skills.
4. The care group director must exhibit good social skills and etiquette.
5. The care group director must be approved by the pastor.

#### **Responsibilities**

1. Encourage, support, and supervise the work of the care group leaders. Schedule individual and group meetings as necessary to ensure that the leaders are fulfilling their responsibilities.
2. Obtain weekly reports from the care group leaders and summarize in a weekly report to the pastor, with copies to the pastor's wife, assistant pastor, and assistant pastor's wife. (This can be accomplished by e-mail.) The reports should indicate who has been personally contacted during the week as well as information regarding individual members that needs pastoral attention or action, such as sickness, hospitalization, job loss, job interview, death in family, conflicts, needs, victory reports, and so on. Urgent matters should be referred to the pastor immediately, if he is not already aware of them.
3. Serve as care group leader for the care group leaders and their families.
4. Distribute phone lists, absentee lists, and other communications to the care group leaders as needed.
5. Once a quarter, arrange a potluck dinner for newcomers, their care group leaders, the pastor, and the assistant pastor.
6. Periodically evaluate the care group divisions and make recommendations as needed.

7. Make recommendations for new and replacement care group leaders. All care group leaders must be approved in advance by the pastor.
8. Make recommendations as needed for changes and enhancements to the care group policy.
9. Coordinate churchwide notifications of schedule changes and other urgent announcements as directed by the pastor.
10. Obtain a list of birthdays and anniversaries from the church database on a monthly basis and distribute to the care group leaders. Follow up with the care group leaders to ensure that a card is sent for each birthday and anniversary.
11. Provide birthday and anniversary cards, postage, supplies for showers and approved parties, and other items needed by the care group leaders. The church will purchase necessary items.
12. Communicate frequently with the pastor, informing him of the progress of the care groups. Scheduled events, problem areas, successes, and new ideas should also be discussed with the pastor.

### **4. CARE GROUP LEADERS**

**Reports to:** Care group director

**Term:** One year

#### **Qualifications**

1. The leader must be a regular attendee for a minimum of six months at the local church or another United Pentecostal Church from which he or she has received a transfer and recommendation.
2. The leader must uphold and support the Guidelines for Leadership and Public Ministry.
3. The leader must demonstrate basic leadership skills, communication skills, and problem-solving skills.
4. The leader must exhibit good social skills and etiquette.
5. The leader must be approved by the pastor.

#### **Responsibilities**

1. Pray for group members weekly and stay in personal contact with them.

2. Call, meet, visit, or invite to dinner on a one- to-one basis.
3. Contact absentees informally.
4. Visit the sick.
5. Coordinate special occasions and notify care group director of housewarmings and showers. For each family, the church will give one wedding shower, a housewarming for the first-time home buyer, and a baby shower for the first child. The church will provide a cake for each occasion. Unless the pastor makes an exception due to special circumstances, the church does not give housewarmings for new transfer members, baby showers for unwed mothers, or wedding showers for live-in couples or questionable divorce-and-remarriage situations.
6. Arrange for food or services as needed for the sick, typically for three days.
7. Give special attention to group members at church, such as greeting and praying with them.
8. Alert pastor to special needs.
9. Foster a sense of unity, not separation from the body. Arrange for visit of newcomers as assigned by care group director and outreach director. Other possibilities (coordinate with care group director, outreach director, or pastor): prayer meetings, home Bible studies, outreach.
10. Notify the office of all address and phone number changes. Obtain missing phone numbers, birthdays, and anniversaries.
11. Notify care group of church schedule changes due to inclement weather and other urgent announcements as directed by the care group director or pastor.
12. Send birthday and anniversary cards to group members. The church will provide cards and postage. The cards should say that they are from the pastor and church as well as care group.
13. Work under the direction of the care group director and pastor.
14. Make recommendations to the care group director for assistant care group leaders in your group.
15. Work with the discipleship director and care group director to schedule all new members for a home Bible study.
16. Fulfilling your duties as a care group leader is not intended to create a financial hardship. If you need assistance with care group events, please see the care group director.



#### About the Author

**David K. Bernard** is the general superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church International. He is the founder of New Life United Pentecostal Church of Austin, Texas, and the founding president of Urshan Graduate School of Theology and Urshan College. He holds the JD with honors (University of Texas), MTh (University of South Africa), and BA with high honors (Rice University). His thirty-two books have been published in about forty languages. He and his wife, Connie, have three children and several grandchildren.

#### Other Works by David K. Bernard

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