

Church Planting International
PO Box 250, Mt. Gravatt, Queensland 4122, Australia

Build My Church!

Matt 16:13. "I will build My Church." - Jesus

VOLUME TWO

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Contents

1	Planting the NOW kind of church	3
1	End Times are Harvest times	4
2	What will those churches look like?	9
3	Why every church should conduct house groups	18
4	Planting a House Church	27
2	Contemporary Church planting	31
1	What do we mean by “Church planting.”	32
2	The Biblical pattern for church planting	38
3	Evangelistic models in the New Testament	51
4	Right motives for church planting	65
5	Another look at the early church model	71
6	A church planting cycle	78
7	Prophetic planning	95
8	Working your plan	106
9	Analyzing a Great Sermon	112
10	Some church planting methods	128
11	Power evangelism in church planting	147
12	Establishing the church	155
3	Biblical principles of praise and Worship	170
1	What is true Worship?	171
2	The Stairway to Heaven	180
3	Preparing the Way of the Lord	182
4	What is Atmosphere?	187
5	What creates a Spiritual Atmosphere?	192
6	What are the Miracles?	196
7	The power of Music	199
8	Congregational Worship	203
9	Leading a Worship Service	212
10	Practical thoughts on the Worship Service	220
11	The prophetic significance of Praise	224
4	A simple guide to preaching	235
1	Homiletics	236

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2	The Textual Sermon	248
3	Expository Preaching	260
4	The Biographical Sermon	269
5	The Preacher	273
6	Preaching with the Anointing	284
7	Teaching with the Anointing	291
5.	Your church CAN grow	300
1	The Early Church was a growing church	301
2	Growth Factors in the Early Church	305
3	Church growth for smaller churches	315
4	Your church can grow!	322
5	The Ministry of Evangelism	327
6	Strategizing for Church growth	344
7	Essential elements of Church Growth	351
8	The mechanics of Church growth	361
9	Small churches can be beautiful too!	365
10	Let's Summarize	371

Chapter One

END TIMES ARE HARVEST TIMES

The Bible predicts a tremendous harvest in the last days.

It is a harvest that will touch the whole world but I believe that its greatest impact will be seen in the so called, “Two Thirds world”, largely involving Asia, Africa and the Latin Americas. These are the areas where the bulk of the world’s population resides and where the conditions are ripe for spiritual harvest and revival.

It is my firm conviction that this harvest will not be reaped by “professional ministers”, but by an army of lay workers recruited and trained in their local churches. From the environment of their churches they will go out into their “Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria”, preaching the good news of Jesus and His Kingdom and planting a multitude of churches.

The Bible clearly predicts an End Time *Harvest*.

Matt 13:38-39

38 “The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one,
39 *and the enemy who sows them is the devil. **The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels**”.* (NIV)

John 4:35

35 “Say not ye, *There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, **and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest**”.* (KJV)

Matt 9:37-38

37 “Then saith he unto his disciples, *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;*
38 *Pray ye thefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest”.* (KJV)

Joel 2:28-32

28 “*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:*
29 *And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.*

30 *And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.*

31 *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.*

32 *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call”.*

Amos 9:13

13 *“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt”.*

Isa 52:10

10 *“The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God”.*

**WORLD EVANGELISATION IS GOD’S PURPOSE,
CHURCH PLANTING IS HIS STRATEGY.**

Not buildings, institutions, denominations, but His Body and His Bride. His Kingdom come!

1: TWO PHASE STRATEGY :

Immediately prior to His ascension, Jesus gave two, final commands. They were His “last words” to His church before He returned to His Father. We have called these final orders, “The Great Commission”. Those commands are:-

A: PREACH THE GOSPEL. Mark 16:15.

15 *He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation”.* (NIV)

Most ministers of the Gospel are endeavouring to fulfill this aspect of the Great Commission, though frequently they are actually preaching it to the converted.

B: MAKE DISCIPLES. Matt. 28:18,19.

19 *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

20 *and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”.* (NIV)

This second aspect of the commission is sadly neglected. Relatively few ministers are seriously trying to “make disciples”. It is primarily for this reason that the church is largely failing to produce trained and effective workers.

2: HOW MAY THE CHURCH MOST EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT THIS STRATEGY?

***BY RECRUITING, TRAINING,
UTILISING AN ARMY OF LABOURERS!
THE MORE LABOURERS,
THE GREATER THE HARVEST.***

3: WHERE ARE THOSE LABOURERS?

A: NOT IN SEMINARIES, COLLEGES.

The total number of seminary students around the world is tiny and irrelevant compared to the vast number of reapers who will be needed in the last day harvest. In addition, Seminaries and Colleges are not specialising in training evangelists and church planters. The majority of Seminary graduates are looking for an established and secure position, not a pioneer task. Most graduates are seeking a teaching position in a well established church or educational institute.

B: BUT IN EVERY LOCAL CHURCH.

The majority of potential reapers of the End Time harvest are presently occupying the pews of established churches. They have never been challenged or commissioned to the harvest. Many of them have innate leadership skills and a sincere desire to accomplish something for God but they have never been recruited or trained. It is a primary task of every true Pastor to discern and prepare every potential leader under his spiritual care.

In the model we are currently presenting, every local church becomes a local training centre. Every pastor becomes a trainer and mentor of leaders for the work of the ministry. According to Paul, this is one of the primary tasks of every apostolic minister.

Eph 4:11-12

11 It was He (Christ) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. (NIV)

C: MANY ARE NOT YET EVEN SAVED!

I feel sure that many of those who will help reap the great harvest are not yet even converted. They are presently outside of Christ. As the move of God's Spirit sweeps the earth, millions will be converted. Many of these, though spiritual babes, will be quickly trained and thrust into the harvest. Their new found faith, dedication and enthusiasm will find fruitful expression in ministry as God entrusts them with spiritual oversight. This scenario is very obvious in China today. In that national church, which is the fastest growing in the world, most of the leaders and shepherds have received no formal training. They have learned from their local pastors and applied themselves diligently to the task. God has more than compensated for their inadequacies.

4: HOW MAY WE MOST EFFECTIVELY RECRUIT THEM?

RIGHT WHERE THEY ARE!

We must reach the potential workers right where they are, sitting in the local churches, unrecognised and without adequate training.

A: THE LOCAL CHURCH IS THE BIBLICAL TRAINING CENTRE.

B: LOCAL CHURCH HAS MANY POTENTIAL LEADERS.

C: LOCAL CHURCHES ARE WIDE SPREAD GEOGRAPHICALLY.

D: LOCAL CHURCHES HAVE EXPERIENCE QUALIFIED INSTRUCTORS.

LOCAL LEADERS ARE EXPERIENCED IN:

- PASTORAL MINISTRY. (2 Sam 7:8. God took David from sheep folds)
- EVANGELISTIC STRATEGY. (2 Tim 4:5. Do work of an evangelist)
- CHURCH GROWTH PRINCIPLES.

5: HOW MAY WE BEST ACHIEVE THIS?

A: DISCERN YOUR POTENTIAL LEADERS.

- People with a willing heart. Who usually volunteers to help?
- Who will gladly undertake menial tasks?
- Faithful and consistent. Who can you rely upon?

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- Born leaders. Who do people naturally gravitate towards?
- Who do they admire, trust, and seek to emulate?
- Who do people instinctively follow?

B: RECOGNISE THEM.

Once you have discerned potential leaders you need to recognise and acknowledge them. Begin to treat them like leaders and they will rise to the level of your expectations. Encourage them whenever possible. Utilise them whenever opportunities arise. Commend them when they earn it, privately and publicly.

C: RECRUIT THEM. Matt. 4:19.

19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

20 "At once they left their nets and followed him". (NIV)

COME. Get up. Stir yourself. Get moving.

FOLLOW ME. Observe, watch, emulate me.

I WILL MAKE YOU. Forming the lives of disciples.

FISHERS OF MEN. *Reaching men and women for Christ and His Kingdom.*

D: TRAIN THEM.

- a: The CPI curriculum is an easily transportable medium.
- b: It is designed primarily for use in the local church.
- c: It is simple, easily absorbed and appropriated.
- d: Pastors and Teachers will first benefit from study of it.
- e: It can be taught direct from the curriculum, + your ministry experience.
- f: Disciple the students. (Suggest 2 nights per week, + +)
- g: Use the students in church activities. On the job training.
- h: Grow them under your spiritual covering. Be a **Father** to them. Not legalistic, dictatorial, but loving, caring, selflessly.
- i: Target mutually agreed objectives.
- j: Initiate mutually co-operative strategies.
- k: Practise mutually supportive strategies.

Chapter Two

WHAT WILL THOSE CHURCHES LOOK LIKE?

For too long the traditional concept of a church has been that of a building.

A particular type, or style of building, whose architecture suggests religion.

A building conducive to lecturing a captive audience. (Pulpit and pews)

A building in which certain religious exercises are exclusively performed.

The image of “church” is changing. It is becoming :-

MORE LIKE PEOPLE, LESS LIKE BUILDINGS.

During His ministry on earth, Jesus erected no churches.

He concentrated on reaching **people** with His message of salvation.

He always went where the people were.

MORE LIKE LAITY, LESS LIKE CLERGY.

In order to gather in the end time harvest, God needs an army of labourers.

That army will be recruited from amongst the members of the church.

It will be recruited, trained, prepared and led by Pastors and Evangelists.

MORE INFORMALITY, LESS FORMALITY.

Most church services and activities have become too stereotyped and formal.

They have been made unnatural, religious, predictable, dry and boring.

Joy and spontaneity have been stifled.

Religious forms and ceremonies have been substituted.

But the now church is breaking out of that mould.

MORE PRACTISE, LESS RHETORIC.

Rhetoric is “*Speech that implies significance and importance, but lacks true relevance*”.

Rhetorical questions are questions “To which no answer is expected.”

Too many churches today are answering questions that no one is asking.

The Church’s activities have been reduced to talk rather than action.

MORE LIKE HOUSES, LESS LIKE CATHEDRALS.

The New Testament church did not possess consecrated buildings or temples.
The New Testament church consisted of people, not buildings.

They met together daily, from house to house, with gladness and simplicity of heart.

The believers fellowshiped together in houses and preached the Gospel in the public places.

HOUSE CHURCHES ARE BIBLICAL.

Rom 16: 3, 5.

*“Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in the service of Jesus Christ. **Also, greet the church that meets in their house.**”*

Jesus spoke and ministered in house meetings. Mark 2:1.

1 And again he entered into Capernaum, after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. (KJV)

Luke 5:17-20

17 And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

18 And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.

*19 And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they **went upon the housetop**, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.*

20 And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. (KJV)

The early church met in houses. Acts 2:46-47

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, **and breaking bread from house to house**, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (KJV)

Peter ministered in houses. Acts 10:24-27

24 And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

Paul ministered in houses. Acts 16:32-34

32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. (KJV)

Acts 28:30-31

30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,

31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him. (KJV)

**There were no consecrated buildings
for first three centuries of church history.**

3: HOUSE CHURCHES ARE LOW PROFILE.

House churches were less conspicuous than “churches” or temples. This was advantageous in New Testament times for a people who were hounded and persecuted.

House churches are more culturally authentic than are “church buildings”.

So many church buildings have an architecture style inappropriate to their cultural setting.

Houses usually mirror the economic standards of the average local person, which eliminates the grotesque image of lavish and expensive “churches” amidst the poverty of the average persons.

4: MORE NORMAL, - HAVING EVERY DAY USAGE.

In most villages and towns, the average houses, (80%) look very similar.

The average person lives in the same style and approximate quality of house and is therefore very familiar and comfortable with it, feeling very much “at ease” there.

More widely available

Every neighbourhood consists mainly of houses. Wherever there are people, there are houses. Therefore, there are many more houses available than churches or public halls. This increases the opportunity to gain a suitable location for the gatherings of the group.

5: MORE INFORMAL AND FRIENDLY.

The atmosphere in a typical family home is much less threatening to a pre-Christian.

People are more accustomed to being in a house, than in a “church.”

There are usually fewer people, the atmosphere is less formal, and more natural.

Newcomers frequently already know some of those person present.

In a small and intimate gathering, people are often much more open about their real needs.

There is often a greater opportunity for sharing at a deeper level.

Spiritual and emotional support is close at hand.

There are opportunities for more spiritual accountability one to another.

There is usually more involvement in corporate tasks.

The architecture and atmosphere of many church buildings is repressive.

6: COMPARATIVELY INEXPENSIVE.

It can be very expensive to launch and grow a church.

The financial cost of planting a church is greatly lessened by using the house church model.

The building already exists. Does not need to be built or rented.

The financial upkeep of a house-church is much less than that of a formal church.

In most places today, the cost of land and of building is exorbitant making it extremely difficult to obtain.

7: AFFORDS OPPORTUNITIES DIFFERENT TO “CHURCH”.

	A Traditional church.	A House church.
Location.	Large, often impersonal hall.	Small, intimate room.
Size.	Large impersonal crowd.	Small intimate group.
Support System.	Dependant on Minister.	Edify each other.
Relationships.	Often fleeting and superficial.	More personal and real.
Discipling.	Does not usually occur.	Effective in smaller groups.
Task of Leaders.	Perform all ministry functions.	Share ministry opportunities.
Prayer emphasis.	Few people participate.	Everyone participates.
Use of spiritual gifts.	Mainly by clergy, or select few.	Exercised by all believers.
Teachings.	Knowledge of Scriptures.	Practise of Scriptures.
Expected of members.	Regular attendance. Listen to sermons. Pay tithes and offerings.	Servanthood and practical ministry to others.
Basis of Evaluation.	How much you know.	How well you function with others.
Basis of Staff	Seminary graduates.	Lay persons produced by the

recruitment.	Professional ministers.	fellowship.
Evangelism.	Mostly introspective.	Encourages friendship evangelism.
Atmosphere.	Traditional, religious and formal.	Informal and friendly.

(Adapted from a model by Dr Ralph Neighbours.)

8: AN IDEAL TRAINING CENTRE.

The house group format and environment provides an ideal setting for the development of budding ministries.

The smaller the group, the less intimidated most people are, particularly when it comes to participating in activities such as preaching, worship leading and the like.

“*Apprentice*” leaders and pastors feel more confident in a smaller gathering. If they make mistakes, their embarrassment is less pronounced.

The house church provides an environment conducive to involvement and participation by all members of the group.

9: EVERY LOCAL CHURCH SHOULD HAVE “CELL GROUPS”.

They spread the influence of their membership much further.

They unite the believers in a geographical proximity.

Makes daily fellowship and inter-action more feasible. Acts 2:46.

They make relationships more personal, practical, effective and productive.

They provide better opportunities for practical pastoral care.

They involve more lay persons in ministry activities.

They afford opportunity for more members to exercise their spiritual gifts.

Many of the activities the bible instructs us to perform are impractical in the impersonal atmosphere of a large and formal gathering.

A few reasons why some small groups fail.

Group leaders are not adequately trained and prepared.

Their role and objective is not sufficiently clear to the leader or the group.

It simply becomes another church service.

Inter-personal relationships are not developed.

Insufficient progress is made towards a measure of autonomy.

10: WHAT SIZE SHOULD A HOUSE CHURCH BE?

Matt. 18:20. possibly defines the smallest kind of church. Jesus said, - *“Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them”*

12 - 15. seems to be ideal. Small enough to have intimacy. Large enough to have variety and scope.

In some nations with restrictions on house gatherings, it is permissible to have up to 12 persons in a house without requiring specific permission or an official permit.

Even 50 - 60 persons is still feasible providing the house is large enough. Before this size has been achieved, this group has already become a local church in a biblical sense. It is in fact a true “house church”.

11: SETTING UP HOUSE GROUPS.

- The local church should adopt and advocate the concept.
- Recruit potential leaders.
- Train and prepare those leaders.
- Designate the houses in which the group will meet.
- Appoint and authorise the leadership.
- Disciple those leaders regularly.
- Conduct weekly leaders meetings for de-briefing and future planning.

12: STIMULATING GROWTH AND CONSOLIDATION.

From its inception the whole group should understand that the purpose of the group is to strengthen and consolidate the believers and to reach their immediate community.

The early, New Testament church, continued steadfastly in :-

- The Apostles life-style.
- A corporate, Koinonia style community relationship.
- Breaking bread. Sharing meals together & commemorating Christ's death.
- United prayers.

“And the Lord added to them daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:47.

13: ENCOURAGE AUTONOMOUS DEVELOPMENT.

Autonomy is the “Authority of self government”.

In respect of a church, the ultimate, towards which it should be developed is to be :-

- Self governing.
- Self financing.
- Self propagating.

14: EXERCISE SHEPHERDING OVERSIGHT.

It is advisable, scriptural and proper, for the house church to remain under the general oversight and covering of the “Mother church” and its senior minister, until the time comes for it to achieve the autonomy level of a local church.

The house group leader should therefore be seen as an “under-shepherd”, exercising certain privileges of his authority, yet remaining under the pastoral oversight of his senior pastor. Major decisions and matters of policy will therefore be determined by the “mother church” eldership. Other areas of authority, pre-determined by the mother church and the under-shepherds, can be exercised at the discretion of the under shepherd and his house group.

15: TWO STRATEGIES FOR HOUSE CHURCH PLANTING.

A: THE CELL GROUP MODEL.

In which a local church institutes Home group meetings in the surrounding localities in which members live. These gatherings are usually convened in mid

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week. They may consist of 10 -12 members with appointed leadership. They meet in a suitably located house. The gatherings are less formal than the traditional church services. They afford opportunities for closer, deeper and more meaningful relation development than does the more impersonal and formal setting of a church service.

In many ways this group is like a mini church and can certainly be encouraged to develop as such. As the group reaches into the surrounding area, winning people to Christ and to their fellowship, it can grow and emerge as a true church.

B: THE HOUSE CHURCH “PLANT”.

This model may be used in cases where a house church is commenced in an area outside the immediate influence of the local church. Perhaps several families attend the church from a nearby village or town. It is not always appropriate or convenient for them to travel to the church, nor is their presence and witness felt in their neighbourhood if they worship in some place further afield. Therefore an obvious possibility is the initiation of a house meeting in that village. This may be convened in the mid week initially and at some later point be held on Sundays also.

The idea, from the very beginning, is that this group will be developed into a local church and at some future date will be granted some measure of autonomy to conduct its activities and affairs in a manner appropriate to its location.

Chapter Three

WHY EVERY CHURCH SHOULD CONDUCT HOUSE GROUPS

1: House groups provide a scriptural, proven and effective environment for :-

a: Training and experience for “trainee” leaders.

Those potential leaders and pastors who are being disciplined and trained in evangelism, church growth and church planting, are able to gain practical experience in these ministries through their leadership of a house group.

b: Ideal learning environment for believers, with opportunities for dialogue, questions and inter-action.

The teaching style employed in most churches, i.e. lecturing to a captive audience, does not lend itself to in-depth or experiential learning.

c: Suitable setting for development of inter-personal and social relationships between members.

The growth and development of Jesus was appropriately balanced occurring in four areas of His life.

Luke 2:52

52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.
(NIV)

Jesus grew intellectually, physically, spiritually and socially.

d: Opportunity for organised, practical activities to express love and concern for fellow members.

There are many practical tasks that should be performed as expressions of the love of Christ through His Body. These include the care of widows, e.g. physical upkeep, painting, etc of their homes. Child care for single mothers and other meaningful expressions of concern.

e: Ideal for friendship evangelism outreaches into the adjacent communities.

Neighbours have a much closer proximity to house churches than to traditional churches. The house churches also reach out in wider circles to the

surrounding communities. Their visibility and influence is much more widely seen.

2: Biblical examples of house meetings.

Acts 2:46-47

46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. ***They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,***

47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (NIV)

Acts 5:42

42 Day after day, in the temple courts ***and from house to house***, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ. (NIV)

Acts 20:20

20 You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught ***you publicly and from house to house***. (NIV)

3: How do house churches fit into church structure?

To achieve its fullest expression every church needs to include “small group dynamics” in its structure.

Dr Peter Wagner, a well known and respected church growth and missions specialist, says that every church needs at least three elements in its structure.

CELEBRATION

CONGREGATION

CELL

CHURCH

CELEBRATION = Our large, Sunday type of gathering, where the whole church comes together to celebrate Jesus.

CONGREGATION = The common interest groups that meet at the church. Men’s meetings, Women’s meetings, Youth meetings, Boy scouts, Girl guides etc.

CELL GROUPS = The house meetings conducted in each suburb in which members live.

4: The basic functions that House groups fulfill.

1: A Pastoral function.

a: The effective edifying of the church is not accomplished by the clergy, but by those members of the Body whom the Pastors and Teachers have trained to perform ***the work of the ministry***. Eph. 4: 11-13.

b: The exercise of these ministries can best be accomplished in small, informal groups, where people tend to be more relaxed, open and willing to receive.

c: The members can relate to each other and help to meet a variety of needs, spiritual, physical and social.

2: A Learning function.

Not only is it easier to ***teach*** in a small, informal setting, it is certainly easier to ***learn*** in such a setting.

a: Musicians and worship leaders who are still learning their skills feel more relaxed and confident in a small group.

b: Preachers and teachers who feel inadequate through lack of experience, can function with more confidence.

c: Members can learn and practice a variety of communications skills in the friendly informality of a small group of their peers.

d: Members can learn to “*move and flow*” in the operation of spiritual gifts.

3: Opportunity for participation and involvement.

In a large congregational setting, only the more experienced usually contribute and participate. Less experienced persons often feel inhibited in the presence of more capable persons.

In the less formal, friendlier atmosphere of a small intimate group, people are usually more willing to join in, express themselves, and participate in the activities.

4: House groups fulfill a nurturing function.

a: Welcoming visitors into the church or neighbourhood.

b: Initiating new converts or “seekers” into the fellowship of the church.

c: Expressing practical care for widows, orphans, singles, afflicted persons and the lonely.

5: *House groups provide opportunities for evangelism and outreach.*

a: Friendly and informal activities such as barbecues, social evenings, parties, etc can be conducted more easily in the non-religious setting of a home.

b: Friendships and relationships can better be fostered in a relaxed home setting.

c: The church that only has Celebration and Congregation functions tends to become introvert and insular.

d: The church that adds house groups to its activities, provides opportunities to widen its circles of contact and influence.

“OWNING” A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.

One of the main reasons why some small groups do not succeed is because neither the leadership nor the members understand clearly enough the reason for their being, or the ultimate objective of their purpose.

This problem must be eliminated before the group commences by making a clear statement of purpose that leaves no room for misunderstanding. The purpose should be conceived and developed by the responsible leadership, together with the persons who will share in its fulfillment. Persons who join the group after its initial launching should be fully informed as to what the aims, objectives and purposes of the group are.

1: The statement of purpose.

a: *Conceiving the Purpose.*

The statement of purpose must firstly deal with what we understand as to what God wants to accomplish in His people. This concept may vary to some degree from other groups or churches, but the inviolable factor is that the purpose must harmonise with the Word of God and a specific understanding of what He wants to achieve. This understanding must be prayerfully and carefully sought and agreed upon by all relevant parties.

b: *Recording the Purpose.*

One excellent way to clarify the purpose is to commit it to writing in a very clear and succinct style. Everything that the group feels constrained to

achieve should be recorded in an orderly fashion. Each point should be carefully and consistently recorded.

Once this has been done, a process of editing should commence which reduces the statement to a concise minimum. The statement should be edited and re-edited until it is reduced to a clear statement of purpose that is in no way ambiguous. It should eventually be presented in a form that is easily understood and memorised.

c: Owning the Purpose.

When we speak of “owning” the Purpose we mean that every person involved should be morally and spiritually aware of, and committed to that Purpose. Each person, from the leadership down to the least significant member, should be wholly persuaded about the importance of the Purpose and its fulfillment. Everyone involved should feel they are an important and integral member of the team. Everyone should know and fully understand their specific person role and what God and the leadership wants them to achieve.

2: The nature of our commitment.

Effective membership of the group requires a commitment on the part of every member. It is not sufficient to “join” the group, there must eventually be a commitment to that group and its members. Commitment implies dedication to a cause or a purpose. It clearly infers an obligation, responsibility and promise. Without this there no be no true discipling of the members, nor can there be a development of relationship that will be meaningful and reliable. Our commitment therefore is :-

a: To God.

We recognise Him as the ultimate One to whom we are submitting ourselves. Promises and commitments that we make are not merely made to each other, but to the God who is over us all. This is eminently true of Christian marriage. The pledge of faithfulness is not only to one’s spouse, but to God Himself. It is also true of our commitment to the God, the Body of Christ, and the persons who comprise that Body.

b: To the group.

The second level of our commitment is to the group itself. Firstly to the delegated authority over that group, e.g. the senior pastors of the church under which the group functions. Then to the local leaders of the group. And not, but by no means least, to the particular members of the group. There should be a love and loyalty to each and every member that enables us to ***speaking the truth one to another in love***. Eph. 4:15.

c: To our mutual growth and development in God.

Our ultimate commitment one to another is to encourage, aid and assist each other to grow up into Christ in all things. Eph 4:15.

Paul outlines some of the requirements for such development :-

Eph 4:29-32

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (NIV)

d: Committed to caring for one another.

The Body of Christ is edified, built up, strengthened and inspired, by that which every joint supplies. Eph 4:16. Those joints are comprised of members of the Body working together in harmony for the effective growth and development of the Body and each individual member of that Body.

e: Committed to reaching the community.

The ministry of evangelism and bringing others to Christ is an integral and indispensable part of the purpose of house groups. They are a biblical model for reaching the Christless community and this aspect must never be ignored or neglected. The informal, natural and friendly atmosphere of a home often makes an ideal venue for non-church people.

3: Commencing Cell groups in the church.

It is most important that as many members of the church as possible should also be committed members of a house group. Vital aspects of their Christian and spiritual development can only be achieved in the kind of relationship structure that a small group affords.

a: How many groups should you have?

The number of house groups that a church should have may depend on several factors.

- I. The number of people in the church who could regularly attend a group.
- II. The response of those able to attend.

III. The availability of sufficient competent leaders.

It is a good idea to begin with a few groups, allow them to grow and then subdivide them, forming more groups in appropriate geographic areas.

b: Choosing suitable leaders.

The right kind of leaders are absolutely vital to the effective functioning of house groups.

Obviously they must be persons of some spiritual maturity and experience.

They need to be persons who have a good working knowledge of the Bible.

They should be persons who know how to hear from God and receive His direction.

They should also be “people persons” who have the ability to relate well to others.

Ideally they should have some knowledge and experience of leadership and management.

Choose persons who are humble and teachable.

Choose persons who will be compatible and work well with the church leadership and others.

c: Train the potential leaders.

The training of under-shepherds is usually the task of the senior pastor or his personal appointee.

The training must be done properly. Neglect of this will cause problems in the future.

Training should occur in a discipleship format.

The candidates must be involved in a class that relates closely and personally to the pastor.

They must be brought into close relationship with the pastoral team.

All training should be biblically based, spiritually appropriate and very practical.

Endeavour to be a true covering to your apprentices.

Be consistently fair and impartial in both the official and unofficial aspects of relationship.

If you ever lose the respect of your colleagues, it will not be easy to regain.

Be prepared to take the blame whenever it is honest to do so.

Always seek to be a shepherd to the shepherds.

4: Locating the house churches.

Obviously the geographic location of the houses will always have some bearing upon their suitability. Try to cover as wide an area as you can realistically service with pastoral care and authority.

Place some of the house groups in those areas that are not in close proximity to the church.

Endeavour to spread the presence and influence of the Gospel as widely as possible.

Always choose the homes of families who enjoy a good Christian reputation and standing in the neighbourhood.

Select a family who will humbly serve as exemplary hosts to the group.

Choose a house that has sufficient space to comfortably cope with the numbers you anticipate may attend.

Choose a home that will be available at whatever times you will need to use it.

5: Emphasise the desirability of this group becoming a local church.

One of your aims in creating house groups is to “be fruitful and multiply”. Healthy churches should birth other healthy churches. Group members should understand and work towards this objective from the beginning. It provides powerful incentive and motivation towards growth and development.

Chapter Four

PLANTING A HOUSE CHURCH

Planting a new church, using the house church model, may not be as dramatic as some other methods, but it does have much to commend it.

- It can be accomplished by other than “professional ministers”.
- It can be accomplished in a low profile manner, escaping unwanted attention.
- Facilities for meeting are much more readily available than are public halls.
- The small group gives opportunity for developing strong relationships.
- The informality of a house encourages people to relax more.

This method of church planting is useful in instances where a church desires to plant a new church in another location, other than those adjacent to the church. Here are a few helpful suggestions.

1: Target a particular village or town.

Always endeavour to be open and sensitive to the Holy Spirit in respect to what He may show you about a particular place. Realise that when some particular place begins to come before your mind regularly it may be the Holy Spirit directing your thoughts and concern towards that place. Begin to pray about that village or town. Ask God to show you what He wants to do there. Begin to visit the place. Drive or walk around it. Get the feel of the place. Let God speak to you whilst you are actually there. Pray for the place as you walk around it. Try to see the place from God’s perspective. Try to share His feelings about its people.

2: Form a team of workers.

As you begin to pray about a particular place you will often discover that others also are interested and concerned about that place. God frequently begin to speak the same thing to a number of persons. Suddenly their concern will come to your attention. Include them in your prayer gathering as you pray specifically for this location for which God is obviously giving you a “burden”.

There will often be potential workers amongst those concerned persons. Make opportunity to give training and preparation to them. Begin to mould them into a team. If any of your contacts actually live in the area for which you are concerned, try to knit them into your team. Endeavour to encourage the various ministry potentials in the people. Encourage them to flow together in a team harmony.

3: Begin to make contacts in the area.

Your initial contacts should be spread as widely as possible. remember the biblical maxim, “He who would have friends, must show himself to be friendly”. Never regard the people to whom you are sent as “the enemy” or the “opposition”. Try to build bridges of friendship with as many of the local people as you can.

This phase is known as Pre-Evangelism. At this point you are simply trying to make meaningful contact and build friendly relationships with as many people as possible. Just be friendly towards them. Let them discover that you are a normal, friendly, helpful individual.

4: Start to share Jesus with people.

Once you have established some point of contact with people, begin to share Jesus with them in the most natural manner. Don't begin to preach at them. Never condemn them. Jesus always built bridges of friendship with people before He began to share His good news. He always avoided condemning people. Rather He sought initially to commend them for something before He began to show them their personal needs.

5: Aim to make a convert.

Amongst the people with whom you are able to share Jesus, (Your own personal testimony, given in a friendly, humble manner is often the finest kind of introductory talk you can give) endeavour, without forcing anything, to bring someone to faith in Christ.

The first break through in this respect is often critical to the success of your mission. The initial converts you make are often a deciding factor in who else you will be able to effectively reach. Believe God for a good, quality convert. Possibly someone well known in the community, who enjoys credibility and standing. Or some person whose life is obviously changed and transformed. This kind of convert can powerfully impact the neighbourhood for good.

6: Commence regular meetings in someone's home.

As soon as possible, try to establish a regular meeting place in someone's home. Try to find a place that is easily accessible to a strong sector of the

neighbourhood. Choose a house that is not intimidating for any reason. A place where the average type of person will feel comfortable. Obviously you will need to find a place large enough to adequately contain the kind of numbers you expect God to initially attract. Don't let the place become too crowded. Some people have an aversion to having too many people in too small a space.

7: Keep the meetings informal, friendly, positive and joyful.

Take advantage of the fact that you are meeting in an informal location. Never try to achieve the kind of formality that many churches have. Do not try to perpetuate another church service. Keep the gatherings informal. Make sure that everyone is warmly welcomed. Try to make the atmosphere as "user friendly" as possible.

Try to put yourself in the shoes of your visitors. Endeavour to see the event from their point of view. Make the gathering as "normal" and friendly as possible. Avoid empty religious traditions that will probably not make sense to non church persons.

8: Provide opportunities for personal prayer.

Most of the new comers who are drawn to you will have personal needs of some kind. This is one of the reasons why they are searching and why they have decided to visit your house group. Whenever it appears appropriate, gently suggest that you would like to pray for them about their needs. Do not pry into their affairs. Don't push this opportunity upon them. Let the Holy Spirit create the opportunity in His time. When you sense that it is appropriate, quietly offer to pray for them. If part of their problem is ill health, tell them of Jesus' power to heal and encourage them to exercise faith with you.

An intervention of God's healing power has often been the effective key that will open the door of a community to the Gospel.

9: Build inter-personal relationships between the people.

So many people in this world are searching for a trusted friend. Jesus Himself is the finest, most reliable friend but we humans need flesh and blood friends too. The church should be the best place to find such friends but so often the impersonal structure we find there makes it difficult to cultivate such relationships.

A house group structure can help to solve that problem because we gather in a less formal, more intimate way. This makes it so much more natural and easy to foster real friendships and build true relationships. Quality time should be reserved for the effective development of such relationships. Emphasis and

teaching should be shared on this subject and various activities should be organised that will facilitate it happening.

10: Share a light meal together after the service.

Members of the early New Testament church obviously shared meals together and this formed a meaningful aspect of their relationship. Eating together can break down many barriers and forge new bonds of friendship. There is something about eating together that affords an intimacy and appreciation that may not be obtained any other way.

The meals, particularly following a church service, do not have to be elaborate. The simple act of “breaking bread and sharing a simple beverage” constitutes a covenant meal. This kind of fellowship can be a particularly good “ice breaker” for new comers. A chance to talk and get to know people in a relaxed and casual setting.

11: Bring in visiting speakers and believers to minister from time to time.

Although the local group may be ministry sufficient in itself, it is a good idea to encourage visitors to come from time to time. It is helpful for a small group to realise that there are many other believers beyond their own group. The visitors may share testimonies or perhaps a song if appropriate. If possible get someone who can preach or teach the Word of God effectively. Their contribution will vary the diet of the believers and bring a fresh perspective occasionally.

12: Keep everyone well informed about your objectives.

It is essential that the vision and objective of the group is kept clearly before them and this can be achieved in a variety of ways. Obviously teaching on the subject is the main way, but banners and slogans can sometimes be used to keep the vision before the people’s eyes and minds.

Every new member should be introduced to and inducted into the vision to enable them to understand and work with the overall purpose of their group. A simple pamphlet can be produced that outlines the basic vision and the ways in which the group is endeavouring to fulfill it. The bible says that “without a clear vision, the people wander aimlessly”. (Prov 29:18) So we need to keep that vision before them continually, inspiring and motivating them towards its fulfillment.

The underlying and ultimate purpose of any Christian community is three fold.

1: To worship the Lord together in the beauties of holiness.

- 2: To edify each other, building up each one in their most holy faith.
3: To effectively reach our community with the good news of Jesus.
To simplify this objective we may call it :-

WORSHIP. FELLOWSHIP. OUTREACH.

Keys to Contemporary Church planting

Table of Contents

1	What do we mean by “Church planting?”	32
2	The Biblical pattern for church planting	38
3	Evangelistic models in the New Testament	51
4	Right Motives for church planting	65
5	Another look at the Early Church Model	71
6	A Church planting Cycle	78
7	Prophetic planning	95
8	Working your plan	106
9	Analyzing a great Sermon	112
10	Some Church planting methods	128
11	Power evangelism in church planting	147
12	Establishing the church	155

Chapter One

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CHURCH PLANTING?"

As we commence this study on "Church planting", it is necessary first to do three things.

- 1: To dispel some erroneous ideas about what constitutes a "church."
- 2: To define what is implied by the phrase "local church."
- 3: To try to simplify the whole approach to this vital subject.

What do we mean by "Church?"

For most people the word "church" means one of three things.

Firstly, a building in which people meet to worship God.

Secondly, people performing religious activities together.

Thirdly, A denomination. e.g. The Methodist Church.

A Church is NOT a building. It's a Company of Redeemed people.

In that first instance, where a church is perceived to be a building dedicated to the worship of God, there are frequently many other features built into the picture. Most of these ideas are not from the Bible, nor the model of the early church, but from Western church tradition. I refer to the idea of a building which is designed and erected in a style suitable to preaching to a captive audience of worshippers. Associated with these traditional ideas are pulpits, platforms, aisles, altars, organs, and in the "Historic Churches", - naves, chancels, vestries, candles, confessionals, even steeples and spires, and a whole host other religious trappings. Unfortunately this concept has been freely "exported" from the West, and adopted in almost every nation where the Christian Gospel has taken root. This typically Western style of concept has helped to strengthen the conviction of many who perceive that "Christianity is a Western religion." I personally feel that it is very sad to see the Church of Christ represented in this manner. Christianity was certainly never intended to be a "Western religion." It was birthed in the Middle East and in Asia Minor and it was from there that the great missionary journeys were launched which eventually brought the Gospel to Europe and the Western world. Amidst all this emphasis, even Christ is usually been represented as a Caucasian. Many sacred paintings depict Him as a blonde

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haired, Caucasian type, which is far from the truth. His appearance would have that of a Middle Eastern Jew and the message He presented had strong overtones of classic Judaism. However, the Gospel was not solely for the Jews either. It is the message of God's love, and Christ's redemption for all mankind. The Gospel is the Good News for all men. Its message is to be preached in all the world for a witness to every creature.

The Church is not a building.

The first error in this concept is the idea that a church is a building. The second that it is a particular style and type of building designed to accommodate the religious activities alluded to in the previous paragraph. Let us make it very clear that a church is **NOT** a building of any kind. The Church of Jesus Christ is not comprised of bricks and mortar, nor of timber board or bamboo. **The true Church is comprised of PEOPLE**, saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ and His atoning work.

As we face the task of church planting, let us be firmly established in our minds that we are not talking about erecting religious buildings. This is certainly not the primary concern. It is perfectly possible, feasible and scriptural for a "church", to function fully without a religious building! In fact it may, in many instances, function more effectively in some facility which is not obviously religious, nor Christian. In some cultures it is much easier for people to attend some place which is not overtly Christian. It has also become extremely expensive in many places to erect a building, the cost of land and of building is exorbitant. It is also a fact that the religious style of building is not conducive to many activities other than preaching and congregational worship. I believe that the contemporary church needs to expand its activities beyond the traditional preaching and worship syndrome. It should be a center for community activities too, but I will speak more about this later when we deal with the establishing of a local church.

"Church", does not mean performing certain religious activities.

In order to move with the great harvest which God is planning to give, we need to break the mental mold we have of what constitutes a "church". Certainly we need to open our minds to new innovations and concepts which will supersede the old models, and particularly those models which are blatantly and obviously Western. One of the features of the new move of God will be churches which are culturally authentic and appropriate for their national setting. For example, the Church in Indonesia should be Indonesian, not Western. The Church in the Philippines should be manifestly Filipino. It should not be draped with Western trappings. Nor do these churches need to adapt Western styles of worship. For too long it has been perceived by missionaries that the culture of the people in "missionary nations", is inherently evil and should be completely abandoned. They have blithely substituted their own cultural trappings, i.e. Western world culture,

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considering them to be "more civilized", and therefore more Christian! In fact much of it is pagan in origin.

Western Culture is not Sacred!

Not only is Western Culture not sacred, in many instances it is down right decadent! Missionaries from Western Nations who have imposed their cultural baggage on to the peoples of their adopted nation have usually done them a grave disservice. There is nothing biblical or sacred about much of the Western culture, and there is an ugly brashness and humanistic pride about those who obviously feel that there is. Many missionaries who tenaciously cling to their native culture, wonder why they have such limited success amongst their adopted people. It is because in refusing to incarnate themselves into the life style of their adopted nation they intimate some measure of superiority which is unacceptable to those they would seek to influence.

The "Western Church" model is :-

- **Non Biblical.**
- **Culturally inappropriate.**
- **A dying species.**

It is based largely on Intellectualism, Materialism, and Skepticism.

What then is a "Church?"

The Greek word most frequently translated "Church", in the New Testament, is "Ecclesia". The Latin equivalent of this is "Ex-Calleo" meaning to "**call out.**" So a church is a company of people who have been called by God. Out of the world system and into relationship and fellowship with Jesus Christ and with their fellow believers. Perhaps the simplest definition of a church would be,

**"A company of like minded believers
who meet together in Christ's name, to worship God,
to edify one another, and to endeavor to bring others into
the Kingdom of God."**

Possibly the simplest description of a local church is the one which Jesus gives us in Matt. 18:20. ***"For where two are three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them."***

Think "Congregations or Fellowships", rather than "Churches."

If we can get ourselves accustomed to the concept of congregations, rather than churches, we can more readily free our minds from the traditional humanistic ideas of "church", and focus instead on the biblical image of what

constitutes a church. Begin to think about "**Congregation Planting**" instead of **Church Planting**, then your vision will center upon :-

- **People, rather than buildings.**
- **Redemption, rather than religion.**
- **Infiltrating communities, rather than hiding in ivory towers.**
- **Building the Kingdom of God, rather than enlarging denominations.**

Unfortunately there are not many churches which are mature enough to function on such a simple, yet biblical premise. The situation has been complicated by doctrinal positions, denominational affiliations, religious traditions, ecclesiastical practices etc. The criteria for membership in many modern churches has become complicated by requirements of doctrinal persuasion, liturgical practice, and a host of human traditions. Requirements for church membership have been made more and more complex and complicated through the years until we have moved far away from the original New Testament pattern. One sometimes wonders whether the early church apostles would be able to obtain membership in many contemporary churches?

As we approach this vital subject of Church Planting I would like to encourage you to think of a church in its simplest, most basic form. I want us to try to get back to the model of the early church. Let's endeavor to visualize the local churches of the New Testament and pattern our thinking and planning upon them, purposing to plant churches which are as close as possible to the original pattern! Elsewhere in this manual we will discuss the nature and criteria of the early biblical model.

Keep it Simple Saints.

Most people have heard of the "Kiss Principle", which is generally rendered "Keep It Simple Stupid", but I am changing it to "Keep It Simple **Saints**". One of the obvious differences between the teaching style of Jesus and that of most modern preachers is that Jesus took the most profound subject and made it delightfully simple, whilst many modern preachers take the most simple of subjects and make it profoundly complicated.

The "kiss principle", is meant to serve as a reminder that we often have the tendency to make things much more complicated than they really need to be. Effectiveness is not achieved by complicating issues but by simplifying them. We are going to try to keep the issue of Church Planting as simple as possible. In this way, many more people will be able to understand it and function in it. As those persons go out into the field their simpler approach and style is going to be appreciated and accepted by many more people.

**It was said of Jesus that the "common
(average, ordinary) people
heard Him gladly". Mark. 12: 37.**

- **Jesus identified Himself with the average person.**
- **He spoke their language.**
- **He did not condemn them**
- **He provided practical solutions for every day problems of life.**
- **He proclaimed "Good News" to them.**

Aim to impact and attract the "average people."

The message and methodology of Jesus was not designed to appeal to an intellectual minority, or a religious elite, but was simple, plain, and easily understood by the masses. His ministry went right to the very heart of where His audience was. It appealed powerfully to a strong segment of the community. He was, to use a modern term, "on the people's wave-length." They eagerly anticipated His coming. They hung on to every word He spoke. They followed Him for miles around the country side. They pressed in upon Him at the water's edge. They neglected to eat their normal meals, so eager were they to feed their souls on the Bread of Life with which He fed them.

What do we mean by Church "Planting?"

This a term frequently used to describe the initiation, commencement, or pioneering of a new congregation or church. Obviously the idea of "planting", is an agricultural term which possibly evolves from the biblical emphasis on "ploughing, sowing, watering, reaping, harvesting, and conserving", all terms with which the people of Israel were extremely familiar. They were for the most part, a rural, agriculturally employed people and these concepts were very much a part of their life.

In addition to this, the analogy of planting has some important analogies which potential Church Planters should bear in mind.

In the process of planting we need to consider the importance of :-

- Finding the right ground in which to plant.
- Sowing the right seed in the right season.
- Preparing the land prior to planting, removing rocks and impediments.
- Breaking up the fallow ground.
- Sowing good seed into the good ground.
- Sowing into ground which has been softened by the seasonal rain.
- Caring for the crop. Fertilizing it as necessary. Watering it regularly.
- Weeding.
- Diligently tending it until the time to harvest.
- Gathering in the harvest at the appropriate time and season.

We will consider these principles more carefully later in the manual when we discuss strategies for Church Planting.

The Certainty of Harvest.

A further encouraging idea from the concept of planting is the **certainty of harvest**, a principle and a process which God Divinely initiated from the beginning of man's presence on the earth. Gen. 8:22. - *"While the earth continues, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease."*

David also tells us, in Psalm 126: 6. *"He that goes forth weeping, bearing his precious seed shall **DOUBTLESS** come back with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him."*

This powerful law of the inevitability of harvest has been built into every aspect of life on this planet. Amongst many lessons we may learn from it is the fact that if we sow, we **SHALL** reap. If we are diligent to carefully observe the Divinely instituted Laws of Nature, we will definitely reap a harvest. So with Church Planting, God has certain principles we must observe. Let's try to discover and consider together these principles so that *"He that soweth and he that reapeth, may rejoice together."* John. 4: 36.

Please remember this:-

Church is not a building, it's a company of redeemed people.

Think of "congregations", rather than "churches."

Don't equate church with a particular pattern of religious activities.

Aim to impact and attract the average person. (There are more of them than any other kind!)

Questions :

1: Can you name three things which would appeal to the average person?

2: Can you name three things that should attract people to your church?

3: Name three principles which one should regard when preparing for a natural harvest.

4: How might you apply these principles to planting a new congregation?

Chapter Two

THE BIBLICAL PATTERN

As we look for biblical principles of Church Planting, the obvious place to which we must first turn our attention is the book of Acts, the historic account of the of the early church. My personal conviction is that this is not only a historic record of the event, I believe it to be a "pattern" — a biblical model of how a church should be planted and established and how it should function. Let's turn our attention so some of the salient points.

1: The promise of Power. Acts. 1:8. (Dunamis)

Jesus said, *"But you shall receive power after the Holy Ghost comes upon you and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost ends of the earth"*.

Here we have the first key to the book of Acts. A key which opens the door of our understanding to all that transpires in the following record. An indispensable factor without which we cannot expect to emulate the deeds of the early church. We ignore this principle to our own impoverishment. Which ever way one may wish to interpret this statement of Jesus, there is an inescapable conclusion that He was clearly referring to the disciple's need for a super-natural empowerment through the anointing or enduement of the Holy Spirit. Such an enduement was forthcoming in chapter two, and the evidences of it were clearly seen in the lives and ministries of the Apostles.

**It has frequently been said that
this book might have better been named,
"the Acts of the Holy Spirit",**

or more specifically, "some of the acts of the Holy Spirit". It has also been suggested that there is a profound significance in the fact that there is no "Amen", at the end of the book, indicating that this was not the end of His mighty Acts, —further chapters were still to be written. These subsequent acts fill the pages of church history. Many great Acts of the Holy Spirit have also been evidenced in the 20th Century and Bible predictions give us strong reasons to anticipate that the most dramatic manifestations of the Spirit's power will occur towards the end of this Age, and prior to the return of Messiah to earth.

The prediction of Jesus began to be fulfilled 50 days after His declaration, when on the Day of Pentecost the Spirit was poured out upon His disciples. From that time they also began to fulfill the remainder of His prophetic

statement, becoming His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and ultimately to the literal ends of the earth.

2: The Importance of Prayer. Acts. 1:14.

We must never forget that this history of Church Planting began in a prayer meeting! Nor should we ever underestimate the power and necessity of prayer as an essential and indispensable factor in every kind of spiritual activity, and particularly in Church Planting. Plans and programs are essential too, but these must be birthed in the place of prayer. It was as the leaders of the church at Antioch ministered to the Lord in fasting and prayer, that they received revelation and instruction concerning the first great missionary program.

If you are a potential Church Planter; conscious of the call of God on your life to engage in this type of ministry, then begin to pray earnestly about it. Spend quality time before God in prayer. Talk to Him about your calling, but even more importantly, wait before Him, listen for His voice, seek His direction. As you fellowship and commune with God in this manner, the Spirit of God will begin to quicken certain things to your awareness and understanding.

**It is usually before God in prayer,
that the Burden and Vision of His heart
is communicated to you.**

It is in this setting that He begins to lay a certain task upon you.

I have had several such experiences over the years. Probably the most dramatic of them being in January 1974. At the time I was the Senior Pastor of a church in Brisbane. I made a habit of fasting and praying through most of each January as a preparation for the coming year. On this occasion I had been fasting for several days and God was speaking to me about a number of things in my life. As I endeavored to work through these issues I began to experience His presence in a very strong measure. Suddenly I became intensely aware of Southern Africa and a powerful desire came to pray for that area. The more I prayed, the more aware I became that God wanted me to go there. At first I thought that it would be for a short visit, but the more I prayed about it the more I realized that God was asking me to uproot my family and go to live there. Soon I was spending hours before God in prayer each day and the more I talked with Him, the clearer became the sense of direction in my spirit. By July I had tendered my resignation as pastor on the understanding that I would be leaving at the end of the year. Meanwhile, I began to make many of the necessary arrangements for our journey.

The next seven years proved to be the most fruitful and productive years of our ministry. We had the joyous privilege of seeing many new congregations planted. We were also privileged to train and prepare many others to successfully engage in Church Planting. Today I know of many churches in several different nations of Africa where there are thriving churches that we were directly or indirectly involved in planting.

The point that I am making is to emphasize the importance of prayer and the guidance which is so often made available to us at such times. Let me heartily encourage you to intensify your prayer life. Only God knows what surprising and exciting things may happen in your life as a direct result. This Church Planters Training Course is not primarily about methods and techniques, it is about spiritual ministry, of which the combustible fuel is prayer.

3: The Power of the Spirit. Acts. 2: 1-13.

Suddenly, on the Day of Pentecost, the promise of Jesus was fulfilled with the arrival of the "Other Comforter". Immediately dramatic changes and transformations which were obviously a direct result of the new empowerment of the Spirit, began to occur. The most notable and obvious of these occurred in Peter.

His initial call to discipleship, recorded in Matt. 4: 18-22. was filled with promise. Jesus called him from fishing on the Galilee and promised him, *"Follow me and I will make you a fisher of Men."*

Shortly afterwards, at Caesarea Philippi, Matt. 16: 13-20. he was greatly favored and blessed to receive the heavenly revelation of the true identity and Messianic role of Jesus. *"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."* But sadly, a little while later, Jesus had occasion to rebuke him for his self confidence and presumption. Matt. 16: 21-23. In the weeks immediately prior to the Day of Pentecost, his life had evidenced some disappointing indications.

His denial of Christ, Matt. 26:69-75. marked a sad decline in his spiritual development, as he denied any knowledge of Jesus on three occasions. Further to this he returned to his previous calling as a Galilean fisherman, John 21:1-14.

At the crucifixion he is conspicuously absent. It would seem that his spiritual life is in a decided decline, but the power of Pentecost changed all that.

After Pentecost he is a transformed person.

Prior to this experience he appears to be somewhat cowardly. Afterwards, he is courageous and bold.

Previously he was timid and afraid.
Afterwards he is fearless.

Previously he is self confident and boastful of self.
Now, his boasting is of Christ.

Previously he denies any knowledge of Jesus.
Now he boldly proclaims Him to the masses.

How typical of the abundant grace of God, that the one who had denied Christ three times, is chosen to be the spokesman on this important day at the inception of the Church!

4: The power of Preaching.

One of the evidences of the Spirit's power upon Peter is his ability to preach the Word with power and authority. His proclamation becomes a model for us.

He preached in the power of the Spirit.
He preached under the anointing of the Spirit.
He preached the Word of God.
He preached Jesus, crucified, buried and resurrected.
He preached Jesus as the Son of God.
He preached Him as God's Messiah. (the Anointed one, the Christ)
He preached Him as LORD.
He preached the forgiveness of sins.
He preached repentance, water baptism and the infixing of the Holy Spirit.
He brought his listeners to a point of decision.
He clearly urged them to "save (separate) themselves from their untoward generation."
He saw his converts "added to the church." Acts. 2:41.

5: The Emphasis of his message.

The crescendo of Peter's message was reached in V.36, when he proclaimed, **"God has made that same Jesus, whom you crucified, both LORD and CHRIST."**

It was this statement, beyond all else that he said, which powerfully arrested and convicted his audience. It brought them all to a point of serious decision and caused them to cry out "What shall we do?"

**Had Peter given a title to his message,
it might well have been,
*"Jesus Christ is Lord!"***

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This must be the underlying theme of all our preaching and teaching too, for it is the foundational theme of the Gospel of the Kingdom. I know that Jesus is our Saviour, Healer, Burden bearer, Counselor, Advocate and much more. But above and beyond all of these things, HE IS LORD. We compromise the message of the Kingdom if we proclaim Him as anything less than that. The preaching of His Lordship embraces all other aspects of His ministry yet announces that He is ultimately and supremely **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**

6: Heart Conviction.

Acts. 2:37. tells us that the listeners were "*pricked to their hearts.*" This is a quaint way of saying that they were brought under deep heart conviction. They were gravely disturbed. They were troubled in their spirits. They were agitated. They were convinced of their guilt before God and they cried out with some degree of distress and anguish, "please tell us what we must do to rectify the situation." They clearly recognized and acknowledged the need to make some appropriate response to God and were willing to do whatever was required.

One thing which appears to be noticeably and sadly lacking in evangelistic services today is "old fashioned heart conviction."

**We rarely see people disturbed and distressed,
crying out fervently,
"*What must we do to be saved?*"**

This is obviously due to certain factors and we would do well to try to examine what some of these reasons are. Let's briefly consider what some of them may be :-

- A: Inadequate emphasis on prayer.
- B: Insufficient Bible content in our messages.
- C: The modern tendency to preach "sermons" rather than "messages from God."
- D: A diminished anointing because of our reticence to apply forthright, uncompromised proclamation.
- E: A fear of fully yielding to the proclamation dynamic of the Holy Spirit.
- F: A reticence to make the personal application as strong as it should be.

7: The power of true Repentance.

When faced with the cry, "**What must we do?**" Peter did not compromise the requirement. He did not issue "decision cards", or require them to "repeat this simple prayer after me", nor sign a church membership card. He fearlessly and plainly confronted them with the need to **REPENT**.

**The forthright response of Peter was
"*Repent*".**

The call to repentance has largely been discarded in modern evangelism. It has been substituted with clichés like, "give your heart to Jesus", or "accept

Jesus as your own personal Saviour." But these are not biblical models. They are the clichés we have invented to make it easier for people to receive Jesus. In substituting these ideas for the biblical emphasis on repentance we have done our listeners a grave disservice. The first word which Jesus spoke when He commenced His public ministry was "Repent." (Mark. 1:14.)

True repentance is the key which opens the door to salvation.
Repentance is essential to receiving true forgiveness and pardon.
It is essential to the healing of the inner man.
It is essential to life transformation.
It is a pre-requisite to the indwelling of Christ within.

Water Baptism is a meaningless religious ritual unless it is preceded by true repentance.

8: The Lord added them to the Church.

Please make special note of the fact that it was THE LORD, who added converts to the Church, and that immediately after "the Lord added three thousands converts to the Church", the process of discipleship began. The new believers were exhorted and encouraged to :-

A: Continue steadfastly in the Apostles' Doctrine.

The word "doctrine", in its original usage, had a different meaning than that which is generally applied today. The modern usage conveys the idea of a theological summary of what one believes on a particular biblical subject. However the original use of the word signified —"manner, or style of life." Thus the "Apostles' Doctrine", indicated the "Apostles' manner of life", or life style. It was not so much a theological statement of what they believed so much as the style and quality of life they lived because of what they believed. This use of the word doctrine is clearly seen in its application in 1 Tim. 4: 16. 1 Tim. 5:1,2. Titus. 2: 1-8.

For some three years Jesus had personally taught them how the Father wanted them to live. He had taught and modeled the principles of the Kingdom in their presence. He had encouraged and exhorted them to emulate His example, and to live as He did. To embrace and live by the same principles that He lived and taught. Thus the Jesus life style, became the Apostles' manner of life also.

Doctrine is not a religious, theological, academic or philosophical issue. It is a loving, practical, serving way of life. A lifestyle worthy of the name "Christian."

B: In Fellowship.

Koinonia, the word translated "fellowship", means partnership. Partnership with God and with one another. It indicates a strong, consistent, reliable and enduring relationship. For example, it is used to depict the marriage relationship, i.e. the "strong partnership of marriage." It is also used to depict a business partnership in which the parties are wholly committed one to the other.

**The New Disciples were
WHOLLY COMMITTED to Jesus Christ,
and WHOLLY COMMITTED to each other.**

The Apostle John says that our partnership is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and ALSO WITH ONE ANOTHER. (1 John. 3: 7.)

The same quality of relationship that had been established between God and themselves, had also been established between the believers.

When they were joined to God through Christ, they were joined to each other too.

When God became their Father, they became brothers and sisters.

Our relationship with one another is just as real as our relationship to God.

We cannot be related to God, without being related to each other.

We cannot be committed to God, without being committed to each other.

"He that says, 'I love God', but does not love his brother, is a liar." (1 John 4: 20.)

The members of the early church were wholly committed to God and to each other and this committed company was the Kingdom of God on earth.

C: Breaking of Bread.

When they "Broke bread from house to house" each day, it does not necessarily mean that they celebrated Holy Communion. It means that they shared hospitality and meals together. They visited in each others homes, enjoying communal meals, getting to know each other better and solidifying their relationships. We can usually get to know a person much better over a meal than by sitting in church with them. Many Christians attend the same church for years but never really get to know each other beyond a superficial knowledge. How can we ever become willing to "lay down our lives for each other", if we do not even share hospitality together?

Their communal meals were also a sign of their Covenant Relationship. The making of a Covenant Relationship was usually accompanied by the sharing of a communal meal together and whenever they ate together, it enhanced that relationship and openly declared it.

D: United prayers.

The fourth thing in which they continued steadfastly together was in united prayers. There is an important sequence to observe here. It was precisely because they steadfastly observed the first three principles that they able to effectively function in the fourth area. True unity in prayer can only be achieved when the parties involved are properly related to each other.

United prayer is much more than merely having a number of people in one room together. Suppose we have fifty people praying in one room. Though they are all Christians, they are not necessarily united by that quality of relationship and mutual commitment that releases the tremendous power of a united petition. However, if those same Christians are steadfast in the Apostles' manner of life, common commitment, covenant relationship and sharing meals together, they develop a unity which is evident when they pray together. (Acts. 4:24.) When such people pray together the place is shaken by the power of God. (Acts. 4:31.)

9: A Praising people. (Acts. 2:47.)

This final verse in Chapter Two is extremely important. It outlines some imperative factors in the first church to be planted, namely :-

A: The early Church was a Praising Church.

It was clearly and easily recognizable as such. Praising God characterized that church. It was clearly identified by this element. There was obviously a considerable emphasis upon this priestly function. We should always encourage new converts, by teaching and example, to become people of praise. We should teach the members of the newly formed congregations to develop a strong emphasis on praise and worship. I personally believe this to be an essential factor if the remaining features of this verse are to be present. Strong praise and worship is important in a church because it :-

- Releases the people spiritually.
- Attracts a special anointing of the Spirit.
- Unites the people in harmony.
- Releases the joy of the Lord which is our strength
- Binds principalities and powers. (Psa. 149 : 8.)

B: The Church enjoyed favor with the local population.

The local populace had great respect for the Church. Just as Jesus had gained great respect and popularity with the average citizen, so His church enjoyed the respect and confidence of the people.

C: The Lord added to the church daily.

It was precisely because of the nature and disposition of the Church that God joined to it the many people who were repenting and turning to Him. I believe that God challenges a church thus; "When you are prepared to care for the people as I want them cared for, I will send people to you."

10: Power Encounters.

Acts 3. introduces us to a factor which became an intrinsic feature of the early church. Modern missiologists have termed it a "Power Encounter". It highlights the supernatural aspect of the Gospel. The authority, power and ability to minister supernaturally into a felt-need situation, to administer the healing, delivering power of God through the redeeming Name of Jesus. - *"And His Name, through faith in His Name, has made this man strong,"* (healed, whole, well.) (Acts. 3:16.)

The importance of the Power Encounter cannot and should not be ignored. It was an intrinsic and indispensable factor in the effectiveness of the early church which cannot be underestimated.

**A Power Encounter occurs
when the Power of God
confronts the power of Satan.**

The power of God accompanies the proclamation of God's Kingdom. The power of Satan confronts it in the form of maimed humanity. A battle ensues, and victory and ascendancy through Jesus' Name, forces Satan to capitulate yielding the territory to the Kingdom of God.

Some accompanying results of Power Encounters.

A: Signs follow the preaching of the Gospel, as Jesus predicted. (Mark. 16: 17, 18.) *"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In My Name they shall cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover."*

B: Wonders and Miracles will validate the Authority of the message.
Acts 2:22.

"Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you."

C: Meets real needs of people.

The great variety of Power Encounters recorded in the Bible illustrate the many types of human needs which are ministered to through the Gospel.

The sick, infirm and afflicted are healed.

Demoniacs are delivered.

Captives are set free.

D: The Name of Jesus is exalted. (Acts. 3: 16.)

E: Many effectual doors are opened.

Throughout the biblical history of the early church there are many recorded instances where the miracle power of God has opened effectual doors of utterance to the Gospel. How we rejoice that, contrary to the opinion of some, that power has been available ever since and is still available today. Throughout the world today there is a tremendous harvest taking place and multiplied thousands of people are entering the Kingdom of God. Scenes of great revival and accelerated church growth are taking place in South America, South Korea, The People's Republic of China, the former U.S.S.R and to a somewhat lesser degree in many other parts of the globe. In almost every case where dramatic growth is evidenced, the presence of effective Power Encounters are to be found.

**Almighty God is committed to
"Pour out His Spirit on All Flesh."**

I am personally persuaded that there is soon to be a greater harvest in-gathering than at any time in church history. I believe it will be a world wide phenomena in which God will "pour out of His Spirit, upon ALL FLESH." I am further convinced that it will be a revival characterized by mighty Power Encounters. I believe that many thousands of new congregations will be birthed and the doors to these incidences will be opened largely through the biblical keys of Power Encounters.

11: From Addition to Multiplication.

In the early days of the Church there was exciting growth as God added new believers to the Church.

Acts. 2: 44. *"And the Lord added daily to the Church those who were being saved."*

Acts. 5:14. *"and believers were the more added to the Church."*

However, when we reach Acts 6, we find the Church moving into a new accelerated dimension of growth, expressed as Multiplication. Acts 6:7. *"And the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem."*

This illustrates the pattern of true revival which gathers momentum and accelerates from addition, to multiplication. Such growth patterns are extremely exciting but they can also bring their own problems for which we must find the biblical answers.

12: Introduction of Administration. Acts. 6:1-7.

As the early church grew numerically there came a greater need for adequate administration. In the initial stages, before this was in place, the church was functioning well with a minimum of emphasis on administration and organization. But as the number of believers increased dramatically so the need for proper organization became more urgent. Even the fact that this growth was

occurring in the context of a spiritual revival, did not mean that the growth was without potential problems. People are people whether they are in a revival or not, and as such they need to be properly organized.

The Apostles recognized that some concrete steps must be taken and began to make provision for more staff and personnel to join them. They saw the need to :-

A: Prioritize their calling. *"It is not wisdom that we should neglect our spiritual ministry in order to engage in administration."* V.2.

B: Choose sufficient suitable fellow workers. e.g. Seven men.

C: Establish appropriate criteria. e.g. Full of Holy Ghost, and wisdom.

D: Recognize and appoint them. V.6.

E: Delegate specific responsibilities.

F: Issue appropriate authority.

The beneficial results of these measures was immediately obvious in the continued accelerated growth of the Church. Acts. 6: 7.

The Word of God increased.

The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly.

A great company of priests became obedient to the Faith.

13: Stephen, the first Christian Martyr. (Acts.7.)

The new company of disciples, (deacons) initiated in Chapter 6. began to show fruit in several other ways too. Two of those appointed, namely Stephen and Philip, quickly moved on from organizing the distribution of food to the role of preachers and miracle workers. Let's consider the case of Stephen first.

In Acts. 6: 8. we read,

**"Stephen, full of faith and power,
did great wonders and miracles among the people."**

A short time earlier he had been deemed suitable material to be a Church Administrator. (Acts. 6:5.) He had met the required criteria set for this role, being "of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." He obviously functioned efficiently in this role, together with the other six men. But soon we discover him in another role, doing great wonders and miracles among the

people. It seems quite obvious that he had been serving some kind of spiritual apprenticeship and that God had now "promoted" him. This underlines a principle frequently observed in the work of God. That God usually entrusts His work to those whose hands are already engaged in service for Him. If you want to become a servant of God, start serving Him somewhere now and in His time, He will promote you.

Unfortunately his new sphere of ministry was short lived. (Acts. 7: 54-60.) Stephen, the newly ordained preacher became the first Christian martyr. Standing by, consenting to his death, was Saul of Tarsus. Who can tell how profoundly this incident affected him and how much his dramatic conversion might be attributed to the powerful message of Stephen and the courageous manner in which he prayed that *"this sin may not be laid to their charge."*

14: The Revival at Samaria. (Acts. 8: 5-25.)

The second of those two young administrators was Philip. Shortly after his appointment as a deacon we find him *"going to Samaria, to preach Christ unto them."* (Acts. 8:5.) Let us briefly examine some of the aspects of his successful ministry there.

A: His sincere desire to serve God was evidenced in his willingness to serve as a deacon. (Acts.6.)

B: His appropriate and exemplary character. Of good report, (reputation), full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.

C: His servant spirit, willing to wait upon tables.

D: He went down to the city of Samaria. His desire and willingness was translated into action.

E: He preached Christ to them.

F: They gave heed with one accord.

G: Hearing his words.

H: Seeing the miracles which he did.

I: Many were delivered from demonic forces.

J: Many were healed of palsy and lameness.

K: There was great joy in the city.

L: They believed his message concerning the Kingdom of God.

M: Many were baptized in water.

N: Many were filled with the Holy Spirit. V.17.

O: The revival reached many other villages of the Samaritans.

15: Philip's Soul Winning activities. (Acts. 8:26-40.)

In the middle of the great revival in Samaria the Angel of the Lord instructed Philip to leave Samaria immediately and journey towards the south, to the road which goes from Jerusalem to Gaza. In the natural this might have appeared to be folly. To leave the scene of a great revival and go to the desert even to minister to an important person as the Ethiopian Eunuch. God's ways are frequently beyond our understanding but as we look back on church history

we can recognize the wisdom of God's strategy, for the conversion of this man led to the opening of a whole new area of the world to the Gospel.

We must always be sensitive to the voice of God and obedient to His every instruction. This can be SO important in the matter of Church Planting. If you should have a clear word of instruction from God, no matter how unlikely the prospect may appear, be obedient. More can be accomplished through one specific step of obedience than from years of human effort.

16: The Conversion of Saul. (Acts. 9.)

The greatest antagonist of the Church until this time was Saul of Tarsus. He persecuted the new believers without mercy, sending many of them to prison and not a few to their deaths. On the way to Damascus, with the intention of bringing believers bound to Jerusalem, he was dramatically arrested by the personal appearance of Jesus. Struck from his horse, and falling to the ground,

**he immediately surrendered
to the Lordship of Jesus saying,
"Lord, what will you have me to do?"**

Paul's conversion opened a glorious new chapter in the history of the early church. We read, "*Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.*" —the growth of the early church was under way and would soon spread to every part of the world.

Paul's conversion experience was unique in many ways but there was a factor which ought not to be unique to him, —his immediate and complete surrender to Jesus as his Lord and Master. This is meant to be the pattern for all conversions. (Romans 10:9) "*and confess that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD.*"

QUESTIONS:

- 1. How important was prayer to the birthing of the early church?**
- 2. In what ways did the Pentecostal experience transform Peter?**
- 3. Name three things which Peter's Pentecostal message emphasized.**

- 4. How important was repentance in the emphasis of Peter's message?**
- 5. State three reasons why we do not see more evidence of repentance today.**
- 6. In what four things did the early church steadfastly continue?**
- 7. Give three reasons why Praise and Worship are important to a church.**
- 8. Please name three things which Signs and Wonders produced in the early church.**
- 9. Please name three things which the Apostles looked for in choosing Deacons.**
- 10. Name five things which happened when Philip went to Samaria.**

Chapter Three

EVANGELISTIC MODELS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the previous chapter we have briefly traced the birth and beginnings of the Church up to the conversion of Paul. We have seen some of the principles and methods employed by the Apostles as they preached Christ and began to establish local churches in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. We shall now continue on through the book of Acts, tracing the origins of some of the early church congregations and the manner in which they came into being.

1: The Church at Philippi.

In Acts. 16: 11-40. We find the record of Paul's initial visit to Philippi and the first contacts he found there. Three important events transpired during this first visit and probably all of them were instrumental to some degree in the formation of the church which was subsequently commenced there.

- He meets a remarkable woman.
- He exorcises a demised girl.
- Experiences revival in the prison.

His visit to Philippi appears to be somewhat by chance for he and his party had initially wanted to go to Ephesus, or failing that, to Bithynia, but God had indicated that it was not yet His time for either of those places. (Acts. 16: 6,7.)

Immediately afterwards Paul had a vision in the night of a man from Macedonia crying, "*Come over and help us*", and they began to make their way there arriving in Philippi, the chief city of that part of Macedonia.

Coincidence, or God - incidence?

It is interesting how "circumstances", can frequently result in a fruitful activity for the Kingdom. Sometimes certain events can appear to be 'coincidental', when they are really 'God-incidental.' I have experienced this several times. Visiting a place without having any real purpose in being there and then sensing that God wanted me to accomplish some task there. We need to be spiritually alert at all times.

An influential City.

Philippi was an important Roman colony, named after Philip of Macedon. Some referred to it as a "transplanted Rome." It served as a Roman garrison town for the area, and was also a great center of commerce. Its location was extremely strategic for that particular area.

These are some of the things of which we need to be conscious as we prayerfully consider appropriate places in which we may try to plant new churches.

- The size of the population.
- The prosperity and influence of the people.
- The strategic location of the city.
- Its importance to the surrounding area.
- Its suitability as a base from which to later evangelize the locality.

As we observe the journeys and ministry of Paul it becomes obvious that he deliberately chose to evangelize strategically placed and influential cities whenever possible so that he could then use them as a base from which the Gospel might spread throughout the surrounding areas.

A Remarkable Woman.

On the first Sabbath, Paul and his team went to the river bank where a prayer meeting was regularly held. It was here that they made the acquaintance of Lydia, a successful business woman who appears to be the leader of the group of women who prayed and worshipped there. Lydia was an excellent contact for a number of reasons :-

- She had an open and receptive heart.

- She had a spiritual disposition.
- She was a respected and influential person.
- She was a successful and wealthy woman.
- She obviously had strong leadership qualities.
- She had a large home, capable of housing the four men in addition to her household and for accommodating gatherings of believers.

Shortly after Paul's initial contact with her she and her family were baptized and Paul and his companions stayed in her home. Obviously this first contact with Lydia was extremely important and critical to the subsequent founding of a church in Philippi.

**Make sure that you prayerfully discover the contacts
which God may have prepared for you
in a town or city to which He is leading you.**

They are usually the key that will open wide the doors of opportunity and ensure the successful planting of a church there.

A Power Encounter. Acts. 16: 16-18.

As the new church was being established Satan endeavored to discredit and ruin it. He tried to accomplish this through a demon possessed girl, who began to cry out "*These men are servants of the Most High God, who show us the way of salvation.*" The words she spoke were true. What Satan was trying to do was to discredit the church by implying that this girl was associated with it, but Paul discerned his intent and delivered the young woman from the evil spirit.

**Once a new congregation is being effectively
established Satan will frequently mount some
kind of attack against it, so be prepared.**

However, he often oversteps the mark and defeats his own purpose as in this case. Ultimately this successful Power Encounter served to further assist in the establishment of the Philippian church.

Revival in the Local Prison. (Acts. 16: 23-34.)

Once a new work of God commences it is amazing how God begins to open more doors of opportunity and utterance. The imprisonment of Paul and Silas, which could have appeared to be a huge set-back for the church, eventually added to its growth through the dramatic conversion of the chief jailer and his family. This is undoubtedly one of many such incidents which

caused Paul to declare, *"The things which have happened to me have fallen out unto the furtherance of the Gospel."* (Phil. 1:12.)

When one is committed to evangelism and church planting, it is exciting to see how frequently the "circumstances" of life fall into patterns favorable and conducive to the *"furtherance of the Gospel."* Opportunities exist all around us for the promotion and growth of the Kingdom and we need to keep spiritually alert to recognize them and to seize them for Christ.

2: The Church at Thessalonica. (Acts. 17: 1-9.)

The Church in Thessalonica was a direct result of the visit and ministry of Paul and Silas following their release from prison in Philippi. The journey from Philippi to Thessalonica was about 100 miles and a synagogue provided an excellent point of contact for the launching of this new work. Despite extremely strong resentment and opposition, the contacts they made persevered until a strong church was established there. Paul actually wrote 1 Thessalonians, to commend the faithful saints there for their dedication to Christ, each other, and the work of the Lord. There are several interesting things here which will interest potential Church Planters.

A: The Church at Philippi, which they had recently planted, sent money, on at least two occasions, to help with the Apostle's support as they labored in Thessalonica. (Phil. 4:15,16.)

B: Paul also helped to provide his own support by engaging in manual labor. (1 Thess. 2:9. 2 Thess. 3: 7-10.)

C: Although their ministry commenced in the synagogue, most of their converts were not from the synagogue but were idolatrous Gentiles. (1 Thess. 1: 9.)

D: The Apostles faithfully proclaimed the Crucified and Resurrected Jesus as the Messiah. (Acts. 17:3.)

E: They also proclaimed Jesus as King and taught concerning the Kingdom of God. This is abundantly evident in the charges brought against them, which accused them of teaching things which defied Caesar's decree, namely "that there is another king, one Jesus."

This charge clearly indicates that Paul taught "the things concerning the Kingdom of God", as he did in many other places. As the Thessalonian epistles later show he also proclaimed that the Messianic Kingdom will be established at the return of Christ. (1 Thess. 3:13. 5: 1-11. 2 Thess. 1: 5-10. 2:14. cf. Luke. 23:2. John. 18: 33-37.)

F: Amongst those who initially responded to their message were some Jews, many God-fearing Greeks, and not a few prominent women.

THE THESSALONIAN MODEL.

Acts. 19 : 1-6.
1 Thess. 1, and 2.

The Epistles provide for us a fascinating glimpse into the life of the early church in its various locations as it spread across Asia Minor and into Europe. Paul and numerous of the other Apostles were now constantly engaged in missionary journeys and wherever they went local churches were planted. In this early period of their history the churches were still in their infancy and needed regular visits from the apostolic bands.

The churches were still quite basic, simple and unsophisticated, without complex structures or organization. The believers were bound to each other by their common Faith, love and hope, rather than by legalities of church membership and formal structures. This can be attributed to some degree to the fact that they were still quite young and undeveloped. However, I believe that there is also an indication here of something which God actually intended to remain in the church throughout the ages. He intended that it should be, and remain, an **Organism**, rather than an **Organization**. He wanted the church to retain some essential aspects of its primitive simplistic nature.

Obviously growth demands more organization and management. The more people you are responsible for, the more you need to organize things properly to avoid disorganized chaos. But there are ways and methods by which this can be accomplished without sacrificing the spontaneity, simplicity and enthusiasm which typified those early days.

The introduction of administrators in the Jerusalem church, (Acts.6: 1-7.) undoubtedly set a pattern for many of the other young churches and in this model we see a marriage of simplicity and efficiency. We witness principles of appointment and delegation which apparently solved the problems that arose in the church and yet managed to retain an uncomplicated simplicity of methodology. It was also a system which obviously provided the right kind of training and experience to graduate many of the "deacons", into the Apostolic ministry. e.g. Stephen and Philip.

Although the New Testament churches were quite distinct and different from one another, there were still numerous common denominators which became

typical of those early churches and from which we can still learn much in this modern day.

Let's take a brief look at the planting and early nurturing of this infant church in Thessalonica.

1: THE CITY OF THESSALONICA.

The arrival of Paul and his companions in Thessalonica is more than coincidental. There are some solid reasons why Paul and his companions decided to plant a new church in this city, and why God motivated Paul through a vision of a man from Macedonia, exhorting them to "**Come over and help us.**" (Acts. 16 : 9,10.)

It seems clear that Paul had developed a mission strategy for world evangelism and that he used this strategy as frequently as possible and tried not to deviate from it. He refers to his strategy in 2 Corinthians 10: 14-16. alluding to it as his "*rule*" or "*measure*", a set of principles to which he held when endeavoring to "**preach the Gospel in regions beyond.**" (V.1.6.) Part of his strategy appears to be as follows :-

He planned to preach in new places where the Gospel has not previously been preached. "*and not to boast in another mans line of things made ready to our hand.*" (2 Cor. 10: 6b.)

"And so I have made it my aim to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundations." (Rom. 15 :20.)

He went to large, strategic centers, establishing a church there and using it as a base from which to evangelize that region. He did not plan to go to every place himself but to establish a strong center in a strategic city and trust that God would raise up laborers and ministers from that city to go into the surrounding areas with the Gospel.

It was for this reason also that he aspired to visit Rome. (Rom. 15:22.)

It was also because of this strategy that he established a church at Antioch so that from there he could reach into the vast area surrounding that city. Acts. 11:19-26.

A: IT WAS THE CAPITAL CITY.

Thessalonica was the capital city and commercial center of Macedonia. It was also the chief seaport of this Roman province and ranked equally with Corinth and Ephesus, the main ports of Achaia and Asia.

B: IT WAS A LARGE CITY.

The population of Thessalonica at that time is thought to be approximately 200,000 people which was a very large population in those days. This factor alone constituted a tremendous challenge. The great mega-cities of our day also present an enormous challenge to the contemporary church. One of the reasons why this is so is the very fact of the multitudes who live there. Where there is a huge population there is a tremendous challenge to evangelize that people. Their sheer weight of numbers constitutes a challenge. Many of the largest cities of our day are virtually unevangelised. This is particularly true in the people's Republic of China and other great cities of Asia.

C: IT WAS STRATEGICALLY LOCATED.

The city was located on the main route from Rome to the Orient and thus had direct and regular contact with many other important cities which could be easily reached either by land or sea. This made the possibility of traveling in and out of the city to adjacent areas very feasible and convenient.

D: IT HAD A COSMOPOLITAN POPULATION.

Besides the native Greeks, many Romans lived here. There were also many people from Asian and Oriental cities, and many Jews and proselytes to Judaism. The local synagogue was an influential one catering for the strong Jewish population and also for the numerous Greek proselytes who lived there. This also constituted a challenge and an attraction for Paul. One of the reasons why Jerusalem had been such an ideal launching pad for the church was its cosmopolitan population. This was particularly true during the Feast of Pentecost when there were devout Jews present from many parts of the world. Their gathering together in Jerusalem was opportune for the launching of the church because the new converts had come from these many different places. Once they had been discipled and grounded in the Faith, persecution scattered them in every direction and wherever they went they proclaimed the Gospel. So the church at Jerusalem was not a simple local church comprised of Israeli Jews, it was a diverse, cosmopolitan congregation. Many of these converts were ultimately to take the Gospel back to their homelands and to their own cities.

E: IT WAS A RENOWNED COMMERCIAL AND TRADE CENTER.

Its strategic location and accessibility by land or sea made Thessalonica a favored and important commercial and trade center. The many businessmen who lived there, together with many others who passed through from time to time, made it extremely attractive to other traders and also to Paul and his missions strategy.

2: THE MISSIONARY TEAM.

Paul first preached in Thessalonica during his second missionary journey. He was accompanied by Silas, Timothy, Luke and possibly several others.

Having such a team is an immense advantage. (obviously if you had such men as these in your team, you would expect something mighty to happen!)

However, even though your team may not be comprised of such illustrious ministers as these, you will still benefit enormously if you are able to assemble a team. Some of the obvious benefits of team ministry are :-

- A greater concentration of spiritual maturity and ministry.
- A greater variety of ministries, evangelists, pastors, teachers etc.
- More prayer power is available to you.
- There is mutual encouragement.

Let us consider for a moment the nature and characteristics of these workers as perceived by the Thessalonians.

- They had already suffered for the Gospel of Christ. (1 Thess. 2:2)
- Their motives were pure. (1 Thess. 2:3.)
- They did not use empty flattering words. (1 Thess. 2:5.)
- They were not covetous. (1 Thess. 2: 5b.)
- They were not burdensome to the people. (1 Thess. 2; 6.)
- They were gentle with the new believers, as a children's nurse with her charges.
- They imparted their souls, as well as the Gospel. (1 Thess. 2: 8.)
- They were also firm, as good fathers should be. (1 Thess. 2: 11.)

All this, that their converts might *"Walk worthy of God, who had called them to His Kingdom and glory."* (1 Thess. 2; 12.)

3: THE MANNER IN WHICH THE GOSPEL CAME TO THEM. (1 Thess. 1:5.)

A: IT CAME BY WORD.

The Good News must inevitably be shared in word. There must be a communication, proclamation, and explanation of the Good News and this involves verbal or written expression of the message.

B: BUT NOT IN WORD ONLY.

Having just stated that the Gospel must be conveyed by word, we must now also add that the word alone is not sufficient. There are necessary accompaniments to that word in order for it to be fully effective.

C: IT CAME ALSO IN POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The message was conveyed in the energy, power and authority of the Holy Spirit.

E: IT CAME WITH "MUCH ASSURANCE."

Initially the "much assurance" refers to the messengers who brought the good news, they were personally fully assured of the authenticity and validity of the message they brought. Some of the reasons why they were so confident were :-

- Their personal experience of the power and effectiveness of their Gospel.
- The results they had seen everywhere the Gospel had been proclaimed.
- Their message was thoroughly biblical.
- The Holy Spirit gave them assurance wherever they proclaimed their Gospel.

The recipients can only experience assurance if the messengers are themselves assured. *"If the trumpet gives forth an uncertain sound, who will give heed to it?"* (1 Cor. 14: 8.)

4: THE RECEPTION OF THE GOSPEL. (Thess. 1:6.)

A: THEY RECEIVED IT IN MUCH AFFLICTION.

The advent of the Gospel into Thessalonica aroused considerable antagonism, persecution and affliction. The new believers were made the targets of venomous attacks from the unbelievers. It is amazing how such persecution can serve to strengthen the roots of an infant church. The very powers which would seem to threaten the existence of the church, become the mortar which cements the believers together.

B: WITH JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Persecution without, but joy within, has frequently been a hallmark of true faith. Joy from the Holy Spirit is not dependent on external circumstances. The Holy Spirit does not only rejoice when things appear to be going well. He rejoices at all times, knowing that the ultimate triumph of the Gospel is inevitable. As we allow the Spirit free expression within us, He manifests that joy in our lives.

C: THEY TURNED FROM IDOLS.

Their lives and life styles were completely transformed. Whereas previously had been captivated and enslaved by idols, they had now turned from (repented of) idol worship. The message of salvation had liberated them from the captive spirits of their idols and freed them to worship the one, true and living God.

D: THEY NOW "SERVED" THE LIVING GOD.

There is a parallel link between the two conditions which both compares and contrasts them. i.e. *"They had turned God from idols to serve the true and living God."* As they had once been dedicated and devoted to their idols, now

they were dedicated and devoted to the living God. With a similar yet even greater zeal than they had held for their idols, they now enthusiastically gave themselves to the service of God.

E: THEY ANTICIPATED THE RETURN OF GOD'S SON FROM HEAVEN.

They lived in the light and consciousness of Christ's return. Not in the sense that they were "all packed up and ready to go", but rather that they conducted their lives with an awareness that Christ would one day return and they would all stand before His judgment seat to give account of their works for Him. This attitude has a powerful cleansing and therapeutic effect on one's spiritual life. The Apostle John says, *"Whoever has this hope, purifies himself even as He (Christ) is pure."* (1 John. 3:3.)

5: THE CONVERTS RESPONSE TO THIS.

The Thessalonians were fortunate to have such exemplary men as their spiritual mentors, for they became followers of them and of the Lord, and thus became examples to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia, and wherever the story of their faith was heard.

(1 Thess. 1:8.)

Four characteristics of these new believers were clearly evidenced.

A: THEIR "WORKS OF FAITH".

Literally, "the works produced as a direct result of their new found faith." While it is true that the faith which saves us is without works, - (Eph. 2: 8,9.) it is also equally true that, being saved by faith, we are then ordained to produce good works as God has previously purposed. (Eph. 2 :10.) James tells us that *"Faith, without such works is dead."* (James. 2: 20.)

B: THEIR LABORS OF LOVE.

Their love for Christ produced a love for others too. Not a love expressed in words alone but one so genuine that it inspired labors in behalf of the objects of that love. Paul calls this, *"serving the true and living God."* (v.9.) Serving God is not wholly accomplished in spiritual service directly to Him, but in practical labors on behalf of our fellow men who are also the objects of God's love. Thus we serve the Lord, as we serve one another.

C: THEIR PERSISTENT, ENDURANCE.

One of the intrinsic aspects of faith is faithfulness. True faith endures and persists, even in the face of opposition and persecution.

D: THE SOUNDING FORTH OF THEIR FAITH. (1 Thess. 1:8.)

One of the biblical indications that a people have truly received and responded to the Gospel is the fact that the Gospel is then sounded forth by them to others. The word translated "rang out", or "sounded forth", could also be rendered, "reverberated", -as a loud noise reverberates and echoes forth.

Paul now saw Thessalonica as a relay station for the Gospel. The message had been passed on from Jerusalem, Judea, Asia Minor and now to Europe. The Thessalonians had not only received the Gospel for themselves, they had become a relay station from which the Gospel would continue to be broadcast to other regions beyond. The church which receives the Gospel is under Divine obligation to it pass it on. One of the clearest features of the New Testament churches is exactly this and any contemporary church which does not actively and forcefully engage in missionary activities forfeits the right to regard itself a New Testament church.

3: Paul's Ministry at Athens. (Acts. 17: 16-34.)

Athens, the world center of Hellenism, was a focal point of culture, philosophy, religious ideas, and idolatry. Paul was deeply distressed to observe that the intellectual capital of the world was fostering idolatry. His strategy and approach into this complex and formidable situation is extremely interesting to observe and something from which we can learn some vital lessons. Notice the "contextualisation" of his message. (The manner in which he ensured that his message was appropriate and fitting for the situation in which he was called to preach.)

His approach was initially on two fronts:-

1: In the synagogue: where he sought to prove from the Old Testament Scriptures, that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. (Paul **reasoned**, conversed and discussed with them.)

2: In the market place, (The Agora, -the Civic Centre) where philosophers gathered to present and debate their views, Paul **disputed**, - (to toss ideas back and forth) with them.

He did not preach at them. (He reasoned, debated, and disputed)

He did not use the Scriptures formally as in the synagogue. (They did not recognize the Scriptures as a basis of authority.)

He quoted some of their own poets and writers. (V.28.) Using their own writers to convince them of the truth. Thus contextualising his approach to them.

He began "where they were".

He sought to commend them. Observing that they were very religious.

He met them on their own ground. They loved to debate, so he debated with them.

He used ideas with which they were familiar.

Under the guise of philosophical debate he “preached a sermon”.

- Discussing the "unknown God", whom they worshipped. V.23.
- Affirming that He is actually the God who created the world and everything in it. Vs. 24-29.
- That God now commands all men, everywhere to repent. V.30.
- That a day of judgment is coming. V.31.

Among those who heard and believed Paul was one of the leading figures among the philosophers, one Dionysius, known as an "Areopagite". Some might regard Paul's ministry at Athens to be a failure because there is no record of a church being established there. However this was certainly not the failure of Paul's approach or message, but because of the stubbornness of their hearts.

4: The Church at Corinth. (Acts. 18: 1-18.)

Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. Although the cities were only 50 miles apart geographically, they were poles apart in other ways.

- Each city is different.
- Each has its own character and characteristics.
- Each requires a different approach.
- We must be aware of this as we seek to strategies for Church Planting.

Athens was a centre of culture, learning and philosophy.

Corinth was a centre of commerce, materialism, and gross Immorality.

It was also a centre for the worship of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, in whose name immorality was freely indulged in. There were said to be 1,000 temple prostitutes there.

Once again Paul worked with his own hands to support himself. He lived and worked with Aquila and Priscilla who were also "tent makers." It is this trade of Paul's that has given rise to the modern missiological term, "tent making", to describe the concept of working in one's trade or profession in order to :

- Gain access to certain countries which are restricted to missionaries.
- To financially support oneself in that place.
- To add to the productivity and viability of that nation.

Paul commenced his ministry in the synagogue and amongst the Jewish community and some Greeks, who evidently associated with the synagogue. His message was the one he had learned on the Damascus road and in Arabia, that Jesus is **LORD AND MESSIAH.** (Acts. 2:36. 3: 18,20. 17:3. 18: 28.)

We are not sure just how long Paul spent in Corinth, possibly some eighteen months. During this time a sizable church was established and Paul obviously taught them extensively. His later epistles are largely correctional in nature, seeking to rectify some of the errors which had crept into their activities. They also indicate though how large a body of truth he had originally shared with them during his stay there.

5: The Church at Ephesus. (Acts. 19:1-20.)

Once again, upon his arrival in Ephesus, Paul discovers prospective believers, this time, "disciples of John the Baptist", by whom they had been baptized. They had not yet heard about the Holy Spirit. Paul built on the teaching they had received from John, explaining that Jesus was the One of whom John had been a fore-runner. He then baptized them again, this time in the Name of Jesus, laid his hands on them and prayed. Whereupon, *"the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied."* (V.6.)

The Theme of Paul's ministry. (Acts. 19:8.)

"Paul went into the synagogue, and spoke boldly, disputing and persuading them of the things concerning the Kingdom of God." The consistent theme of Paul's ministry is things concerning the Kingdom of God. This inevitably includes:-

- That Jesus is the crucified, resurrected and glorified Son of God.
- That He is the promised Messiah.
- That He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
- That He has brought God's rule to earth.
- That He will return to rule the earth from the Throne of David.

Paul remained in that region for some two years during which time *"all those who dwelt in Asia, heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."* (V.10.)

6: Paul's testimony before Agrippa. (Acts. 26: 1-32.)

Paul had already made his defense before Festus and now he presents it to Agrippa. He realizes that in certain circumstances there is nothing more powerful or effective than one's own personal testimony to God's saving power through Christ. His testimony contains several parts :-

A: He sincerely complimented Agrippa. Vs. 1-3. Whenever this is possible, do it. Compliment your listeners on some issue which is honestly praise worthy. This establishes a good, positive rapport. It is much more productive than antagonizing one's audience.

B: He spoke of his early life as a Jew. Vs. 4-11.

C: He described his antipathy towards the Christians. Vs. 9-11.

D: He described his dramatic confrontation with Christ on the road to Damascus. Vs. 12-18.

E: He powerfully applied his experience to Agrippa himself. Vs. 27-32. He did this so effectively that Agrippa then remarked, *"Almost you persuade me to be a Christian."* (Acts.26:28.)

F: He endeavored to "draw in the net", V.29. *"I would to God that not only you, but all who hear me this day, were altogether such as I am, except for my handcuffs."*

7: Paul's visit to Rome. (Acts. 28: 16- 31.)

We conclude these brief insights into the growth of the early church with some comments about Paul's stay in Rome, where he was under house arrest for some two years. During this time he was allowed his own hired house and was free to receive all who came unto him, *"preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."*

The phrase "The Kingdom of God", includes the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ but also includes a strong prophetic reference to Christ's reign over the nations in the eternal future. It definitely has a futuristic aspect and is eschatological in emphasis.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

- 1. What three events helped to establish a believing community at Philippi?**
- 2. Give three characteristics which Paul discovered in Lydia. Why was she an excellent initial contact?**
- 3. How do we know that Paul preached the Kingdom of God in Thessalonica?**
- 4. What must we emphasize to proclaim the Kingdom of God?**
- 5. How did Paul's approach in the Synagogue at Athens differ from his method in the civic centre?**
- 6. What was the theme of Paul's ministry at Ephesus? Name 3 things this might include.**
- 7. Give three features of Paul's testimony to Agrippa.**

Chapter Four

RIGHT MOTIVES FOR CHURCH PLANTING

It is essential that everything we do for God springs from a right motive. This is particularly true in respect of Church Planting. If our desire to plant a church springs from a wrong motive, we will build that church on a false foundation and serious problems are absolutely inevitable.

Some may question the very idea that one might ever do this. They may ask, "Surely the very desire to work for God and certainly to engage in the arduous and sometimes thankless task of pioneering a church can only be a good one." It is true that Paul thanked God that Christ was being preached, even if sometimes it was motivated by "envy and strife". (Phil.1: 12-18.) Nevertheless it is most desirable that Christ be preached out of a good, sincere, pure motive. For whatever spirit the message is preached in, conveys itself to the recipients.

**If we wish to lay a good foundation,
we must do it with the right motive.**

Firstly let's ask ourselves what might be some of the wrong motivations which we could have .

A: Pride.

It was this weakness which brought about the downfall of Lucifer. (Isa. 14: 12-23. Ezek. 28: 12-19.) He was originally an important servant of God, but pride lurked in his heart and eventually destroyed him. Pride has been the instrument of destruction that has ruined many other servants of God. Whatever the eventual circumstances of their failure, it is usually pride and ego which pave the path of destruction. Human pride can work in many detrimental ways, and spiritual pride is even more devastating. Such pride can be an underlying motivating force that causes a person to commence a church. Their pride drives them relentlessly, but any church found upon human pride and ego is destined to disappointment and failure.

B: Self ambition and the desire to succeed.

Many people are driven by the desire to succeed in life and to accomplish something which will bring them to the attention of a public. If such a person be a Christian, and that self characteristic is not dealt with, they may well see the opportunity to commence and pastor a church as a means to gratify their ambition for accomplishment. Although commencing a new church is by no

means an easy task, it is an easier way than many to achieve a measure of success that wins some public recognition.

C: Making a Name and a Reputation.

In any church group or denomination there is a certain recognition of Church Planters as the "Movers and Shakers", of their group. They are somehow perceived to be more adventurous, more daring and more colorful than their peers who are content to shepherd a flock. Jeremiah asks,

**"Do you seek great things for yourself?
Don't seek them!"**

A secret desire for such recognition can sometimes be mixed with a more sincere desire to genuinely accomplish something for God. However, we need to prayerfully ensure that our motives are not mixed but pure and that our highest intention is that God may be glorified through our ministry.

Having the right Motives.

Now let's consider the right kind of motivation.

A: To Make Christ known among the heathen.

This became the consuming passion of Paul's life, to know Christ, and to make Him known, and it should be our greatest desire and ambition too. The underlying reason for all our preaching and teaching should be to bring people to a knowledge of Jesus Christ. For the unconverted that they might know Him and His saving grace. For the believers and saints, that they know Him more intimately and deeply.

B: To Exalt Him and make His Name great.

"There is no other Name given on earth amongst men by which they might be saved, but the Name of Jesus." (Acts. 4: 12.)

"And His Name, through faith in His Name, has made this man whole." (Acts. 3: 16.)

"That at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." (Phi. 2: 11.)

C: To accomplish the desire of His heart.

Isaiah says of the Suffering Servant, *"He shall see the results of the travail of His soul and shall be rewarded".* (eminently satisfied)

God the Father invites the Son, *"ask of Me and I will give you the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession."* (Psa.2:8.)

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When we engage in evangelistic ministry and soul winning activities, bringing the heathen to a saving knowledge of God and His grace, we help to fulfill the desires of the Savior's heart.

D: To bring people to the Saving Knowledge of Jesus.

The greatest thing we could ever do for any person is to bring them into a knowledge of Jesus Christ and His wonderful salvation. There is no greater way in which we could enrich or bless their lives than this. Which is precisely why our calling as preachers of the good news, is the highest and greatest calling on earth. Jesus said, *"What shall it profit a person if they should gain the whole world and lose their soul?"* If your neighbors should gain the whole world, but did not know Christ and went forever to a lost eternity, their whole life would profit them nothing.

E: To see people enter the Kingdom of God.

Anyone who has ever been privileged to preach the Gospel and to see people receive Christ and enter the Kingdom of God as a direct result have experienced the greatest thrill in life. What a joy to see people brought - "Out of the authority of darkness, into the Kingdom of God's dear Son." How rewarding to see their lives dramatically changed, enhanced and enriched, through receiving the grace of God. What a blessing to have people say, "It was your preaching that brought me to a decision to receive Christ as my Saviour and Lord." It is wonderful here on earth when people approach you to tell you such things, but how much greater it will be in eternity should they say, "Were it not for the fact that you came and preached Christ in our community, I may not have been here!"

F: To Minister Healing to the Whole Man.

It is also a tremendous privilege to bring healing to the sick in Jesus' Name. Wherever the Gospel was proclaimed by the early church, people received healing through the power of God. And Jesus is still the same today. If God has blessed you with a message and a ministry which includes the ability to bring healing to the sick and afflicted, what a blessing and privilege that is! In His Name the sick may be healed, lepers cleansed, cripples walk, and the demised delivered. The Apostles of old preached a Full Gospel message of salvation, healing and deliverance and the message has not changed.

G: To see God's Kingdom extended here on earth.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, *"Your Kingdom come, Your Will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* (Matt. 6: 10.) Every time we plant a new church anywhere in the world, the Kingdom of God comes and His Will is done on earth as it is in heaven. With the planting of every new church we are taking territory from Satan and advancing the growth of God's glorious Kingdom

amongst men. In so doing we are helping to prepare the way for the return of the Lord and the unveiling of His Kingdom rule.

H: To fulfill our Calling and make full proof of our ministry.

2 Tim. 4:5. Paul exhorts Timothy, *"Do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry."* Not every pastor is called to be an evangelist per se, but every preacher can *"do the work of an evangelist"*, in effectively preaching the Gospel and bringing people to Christ. Whether we are pastors, teachers, apostles or prophets, we can do the work of an evangelist and thus make our ministry fully effective.

I: To obtain a Crown of Rejoicing.

For every soul winner or evangelist there is a special eternal award available. It is called the "Crown of Rejoicing." (1 Thess. 2:19.) That Crown of Rejoicing, is the privilege of seeing people in God's eternal presence whom we had the joy of witnessing to effectively. Paul says, *"For what is our crown of rejoicing? Is it not the sight of you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at His coming? YOU ARE OUR GLORY AND OUR JOY."*

J: To hear Jesus say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Please notice the criteria for this reward. It is not success, great achievements, or being the pastor of a huge congregation. The reward is given for being a *"good and faithful servant"*.

Planting with the right Motive.

**"Except the Lord build the house,
they labor in vain that build it."
(Psa. 127: 1.)**

As we examine the matter of motive, we need to seriously ask ourselves, "What is my true purpose in desiring to plant a church?" "What do I really hope to gain from it?" Here are some good positive motives and purposes:-

A: Churches are the "Building Blocks" of the Kingdom.

In Matthew 16: 18. Jesus declared, "I will build my Church". He is the real church builder and we are only successful as we function as co-laborers together with Him. He is not building His Church with bricks and mortar but with the "living stones" - redeemed people. He builds them into local churches, integrating lives together and causing them to grow up together into Him.

B: Churches are the Local Branches of the Church Universal.

Each local functioning body of believers is a branch of the great universal church over which Christ is the sovereign Head. Each local church should fit into its geographical and cultural setting. This is one of the reasons why God allows such a great variety of churches to flourish. There is something for everybody. A local church needs to fit into its location and environment geographically, culturally, linguistically, doctrinally and traditionally. Each church should be authentic and appropriate to its location.

C: Churches are the Biblical Communities of the Redeemed Company.

Local churches are authentically New Testament in nature. They are certainly not an invention of man though he may have shaped their present appearance to a considerable degree. In fact their style goes back beyond the New Testament, for careful research will reveal that the New Testament churches were based to a large extent on the synagogue model of the ancient Jews. In that context, churches are to be far more than "Sunday go to meeting" facilities.

The synagogue was always the centre of life within a community. Jewish thinking does not subscribe to a dichotomy in which the natural and the spiritual are rigidly divided. It sees life more as a whole, and therefore every activity we engage in is as unto the Lord. And the synagogue becomes the centre of all community life. New Testament churches were also very much like this and I am persuaded that modern churches should also adopt and pursue this model. It would certainly fit much better into many non-Western cultures, than does the Western model which one frequently finds.

D: Planting New Churches spreads the Net wider.

Every new congregation which is planted brings the Gospel closer to someone's door step. The more churches there are, the better chance of reaching more people. The more variety there is, the more chance that one church or another will appeal to, and attract more people into its sphere of influence. More local churches = more Gospel outreach.

E: Church Planting is the key to World Evangelism.

There is presently in many church circles, a vision of harvest and ingathering. This decade has been called, "The decade of harvest", and concepts of world evangelism are being propagated everywhere.

**I think that we need to clearly understand
that such a task is impossible without the
strongest possible emphasis on Church Planting.**

Neither evangelistic Crusades, radio evangelism, TV evangelism, nor literature evangelism are going to accomplish the task for the simple reason that it is the local church which conserves and consolidates new believers into the Body of Christ. Some of the biggest mass Crusades in modern history have resulted in pitifully small numbers of enduring believers because there was too little emphasis and importance placed upon the value and role of the local church community. **The planting of new local churches accomplishes several important functions:-**

- **It covers more territory.**
- **It reaches more people.**
- **It employs more laborers.**

F: Local churches are "Sheepfolds" for God's people.

The biblical pattern for local churches has been fashioned by God for the care, protection and covering of His sheep. God frequently calls His people sheep and this analogy tells us a great deal about them. However suffice to say for now that sheep are somewhat vulnerable, especially when alone. They need the guardianship of a flock and they need the care of a Shepherd and the protection of a sheep fold. Wolves, whose nature it is to destroy sheep, always endeavor first to separate them from the flock. So, the more local churches there are, the more opportunities for sheep to find a sheepfold which suits their needs.

As we approach the great End Time Harvest, we must understand that reaching the masses of humanity is only the first part of the equation. Building them into the Body of Christ is also absolutely essential lest the fruit which has been harvested is then allowed to perish and waste. The harvest strategy must therefore be based on the concept of local church planting. Not only is this the biblical model, it is also the only way to conserve the fruit of the harvest.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES.

- 1. Please name three human characteristics which are wrong motives for Church Planting.**
- 2. Please name five correct motives for Church Planting.**
- 3. Please give three reasons why Church Planting is vitally important.**

Chapter Five

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE EARLY CHURCH MODEL

As we now begin to seriously consider the kind of church we are going to plant there is only one source to which we can refer - The Bible. We must see that we build according to the biblical model. When God was instructing Moses in the building of the Tabernacle, He constantly urged him to *"ensure that you made all things according to the pattern which was shown you in the mount."* (Ex. 25:40. 26:30. 27:8. Heb. 5:8.) We too are "builders together with the Lord", and must endeavor to do things according to the biblical pattern.

Back to the Beginning.

As we examine the origins of the early church in the Book of Acts, we are aware of two things:-

1: A Biblical Model.

The early church was founded by a sovereign act of God, according to known biblical principles. What we have therefore is not only a recorded history of the inception of the New Covenant Church, but a model for the Church throughout the ages.

There are certain biblical indicators present in the early church model which should be perpetuated in the church model throughout the ages irrespective of geographical or contemporary context.

A: A Scriptural foundation.

The launching of the early church carries all the hall marks of biblical authenticity. It was obviously orchestrated by the God of the Bible. Its origins are all prophetic fulfillment of the predictions of the prophets. Hidden beneath the surface of the Old Covenant writings, lay the promise of a New Covenant Community, and the early church begins to fulfill those predictions.

So the Holy Bible is THE resource book of the Church. It is the inspiration and guide for every Christian aspiration and activity. Therefore our objective in Church Planting needs to be to commence new Bible based communities of redeemed and Spirit filled believers in Jesus.

B: Apostolic Oversight.

The early Apostles, each of them chosen and called by the Lord, rightly assumed the oversight of the early church. They were not governed by some ecclesiastical system or man conceived laws, but by Divinely called and appointed ministers who conformed to the New Testament pattern for ministry. Each and every one of them were:-

- Born again.
- Spirit filled.
- Divinely called.
- God enabled ministers of the New Covenant.

C: Charismatically Empowered.

The churches in the New Testament were all charismatically active. That is, the supernatural power of the Spirit was evidenced in them. They did not rely on humanistic programs or expertise. Their confidence was not in human accomplishment or ability, but in the anointing and power of the Spirit. Consequently they witnessed many supernatural confirmations upon their ministry, and their activities flourished through the dynamic of the Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit were all powerfully evident in the early church even to the point of some excess in the case of the Corinthian believers. This caused Paul to write a lengthy letter of correction but in no way did he advocate the abandonment of these charismatic evidences.

D: Biblical criteria of Membership.

"The Lord adding to the church", is the quaint way in which Luke defines the growth of the membership of the early church. For that church is seen as a body, and not a club. In the modern context many churches have become like clubs and their philosophy of membership subscribes to the style of a club. Membership is often gained by formal application, screening, confirmation, transfer, or the like. The applicants are screened and approved using certain criteria applicable to that particular church or denomination.

In the context of the early church new members were won to Christ, baptized in water, initiated into the Apostles doctrine and life style, and into the life of the redeemed community. There was, at one and the same time, a spiritual dynamic and a human one. That human aspect was not formal or legalistic but informal and practical.

E: House Cell Groups.

"Breaking bread from house to house", (Acts. 2: 46.) implies several things but the clearest of them is simply that much of the early church activity occurred in the houses of the believers. Obviously the groups involved at any one time would not be very large because the size of the average home would preclude this. So we may be certain that the pattern established is that of smaller groups of believers meeting together regularly in their various houses for purposes of worship and mutual edification. They partook of communal

meals. They engaged in prayer. They were praising God together. These gatherings must have been overseen by "lay leaders", to use a definition with which we are familiar. The meetings were undoubtedly an indispensable factor in both the edification of the believers and the spread of Christianity. They are essential to church growth and to church planting.

F: Larger United Gatherings.

"And in the Temple." (Acts. 2: 46.) Not only did they meet in small groups within their homes, they also met together regularly in much larger groups when evidently the whole local church came together. In our modern context this has been described as "celebration", i.e. when the whole congregation comes together, as distinct from meeting in numerous smaller groups. Both modes are important and perhaps even essential to the effective functioning, growth, and spread of the church.

G: Ministries of Social Concern.

"And all that believed were together and had all things in common." (Acts. 2: 44.) the expression, *"were together"*, implies much more than being in the same proximity. It indicates a togetherness which epitomizes the Koinonia, (partnership, sharing, common bond) of the church in those days. It included a mutual loving concern and care one for another which extended into the very practices of every-day life. It was actually this concept of caring and sharing to which the contemporary commentators referred when they said, *"these who have turned the world upside down have come here."* (Acts. 17: 6.) This area of social concern was not a temporary factor in the life of the church. Years later we find strong evidence of it in Acts. 6: 1-7. when the Church was ministering to widows on a daily basis in a caring program which included the provision of meals.

H: Praise and Worship.

"Praising God and having favor with all the people." (Acts. 2:47.) This statement intimates two important things.

The first is that they had a strong emphasis on praising God. The clear indication is that their praise was released in expressions of gladness. (V.46.) They gave joyful and enthusiastic expression to their praise.

The second thing is that they gained favor with a large number of people. I am sure that the two things are linked and certainly there is NO intimation that their exuberant style of praise in any way isolated them from public approval or favor.

The thing which I am going to suggest here is that music and vocal expression is a legitimate language of the heart and an extremely powerful medium of communication. It speaks from the heart and to the heart. It arouses attention, arrests people, communicates a powerful message to them and leaves them with a desire to own the same joy which is being conveyed by the expressions

of praise and gladness. I feel sure that music, and praise and worship, will play a powerful role in the great harvest of the last days. Expressions of praise which are biblically based but contemporarily appropriate will help to spear head the great advance of the Gospel into the pagan world.

As you formulate your plans and strategies to penetrate the nations please give music and its effective appeal some serious consideration. Do not be afraid to use music which is radical, different, culturally appealing and appropriate. Music, under a mighty anointing of the Spirit will make powerful inroads into the world community .

I: The Church was discriminated against and persecuted.

The early church did not grow because it was respectable and socially acceptable. Nor because it enjoyed government favor and protection. On the contrary, it was the target of grave discrimination, persecution and imprisonment. But Jesus had promised that even the "*Gates of Hell would not prevail*", against the Church which he would build. I am certainly not advocating that we should seek to provoke discrimination, antagonism, or persecution. These are not elements we should seek. Nevertheless, they have frequently been inevitable consequences of preaching an uncompromised Gospel. The facts indicate that far from discouraging or deterring church growth, such factors actually foster it. In fact the Church today is experiencing its most dramatic and prolific growth in countries where its presence is most powerfully resisted.

J: The Early Church was Alive, Dynamic and Rapidly Expanding.

It is certainly true that,

"Where there is life, there is growth."

Growth is a sign of healthy life. Every living thing enjoying normal health will grow. So if a particular church is not growing then someone should look to the health of that church.

Amazingly there are many Christians and ministers who are fearfully afraid of vital signs of life. They try to suppress and discourage any signs of animation or life. They breed stagnation and sterility into everything they contact. They are fearful of emotional expression, exuberance or enjoyment. They are more desirous of indications of death than of life. Church services are deadly dull, liturgies predictable and boring. Preaching is unimaginative and inane. Any signs of life have long since been extinguished. And then those leaders wonder why nobody wants to attend their church.

Let's welcome life. Not just emotional expression, but vital signs of dynamic life. Let the wind of the Spirit blow through the churches, blowing away the cob webs and breathing new life into the nostrils of the church.

**Let the churches you plant
be places of Love, Life, and Power.**

2: A Culturally Appropriate Model.

We should also be aware that this newly born Church was culturally authentic, and appropriate to its religious, geographic and contemporary context.

A: Since the Church was birthed in Jerusalem, in the midst of a Jewish Feast, (Shavouth- Pentecost) amongst a population comprised of observant Jews from most parts of the world, it obviously had a strong Jewish content and image. All the original members of the Church were Jewish, though a tiny minority were actually proselytes from Gentile backgrounds. In the early stages of its growth and expansion the apostles tended to target the local synagogues, making them a base for their preaching and teaching programs. So for many years the Church continued to have an authentic Jewish bias.

B: Since the Church was birthed in the Middle East, it had a clear and distinctive Middle Eastern content and image. Even though its early membership was very cosmopolitan it still retained much of this image. As the Church began to grow, rapidly expanding into Asia Minor, its customs and image was modified somewhat to its new environments.

C: Since the Church was birthed in the first century A.D. its methodologies and activities were appropriate to its contemporary setting. I believe that it was in every way a church which was completely appropriate to its contemporary setting.

I am convinced that we are now touching an extremely important issue for Church Planters. To have maximum impact upon a community, our approach must be appropriate to that community in its religious, cultural and contemporary appeal.

For example, if our purpose is to plant a new church in a Muslim community we must make every effort to ensure that our image does not antagonize the ethics of that community. There are many facets of modern Christianity, particularly the "Western World" brand, that are obviously offensive to the Muslim mind. Many of these things are not truly Christian, nor are they authentically biblical. Some are of Christian tradition, adopted somewhere

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along the long and varied path of church history. Others are blatantly Western mind additions, adopted from the powerful influence of the Western World upon the last few centuries of Christian history.

Now I am certainly not suggesting that we should compromise anything that is genuinely biblical and authentically Christian. Nor can our message be compromised in any way. But our presentation of that message can be adjusted to avoid unnecessary offense or misunderstanding. Our image, in terms of dress, behavior and life style must always be appropriate to the situation. There are many common perceptions amongst Muslim people in respect of Christians, and particularly active, evangelical Christians. We probably do not agree with these perceptions nor see them as valid, but neither should we ignore them. We should always be aware of and mindful of them, ever seeking to avoid causing unnecessary offense. Jesus incarnated Himself into the environment of His day and times in a religious sense. He observed the Feasts, He kept the Law. Although many religious Jews opposed and withstood Him their criticisms were not legitimate or valid. He did not offend or break their law. In fact he distinctly said, "*I am not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it.*"

Many Christian churches In Asia and Africa, have offended the religious conscience of their community by espousing and practicing concepts which are clearly Western World in their origins. They have often inadvertently strengthened the idea that "Christianity is a Western, or even a White man's religion." This has tended to greatly reduce the attractiveness and relevance of the Christian message.

We can also see frequent evidence that Western cultural norms have intruded into the original planting of churches in many nations. Many such churches have espoused a Western cultural pattern, complete with Western architecture, styles of worship, and styles of administration.

I eagerly anticipate the day when this influence will cease. When Asian churches will be just that, - Asian churches. When African churches will no longer appear to be colonial outposts but will become culturally authentic to their people. The cultures which have long been despised by Westerners and deemed inferior and demonic, often have a richness of quality that the Western mind has never taken the time to understand or respect. Too often he has taken the superficial attitude that everything African is pagan with a thin veneer of civilization. He has sought to replace all traces of the historic culture of the people with so called Christian standards which have often been as pagan as have those they have sought to replace.

Similar principles hold true in respect of the cultural environment of those we would seek to win. Not only should we not ignore their cultural norms and

requirements, we should actively seek to accommodate them to the best of our ability, again without in any way betraying or compromising those issues which are intrinsically biblical. Nothing can be gained from ignoring or belittling the issues of local culture.

3: The Early Church was a contemporary One.

We also need to be acutely aware of the necessity to be appropriate in a contemporary sense. There is an unfortunate tendency amongst many Christians and Christian Churches and Organizations to believe that "old is good, and modern is evil." Somehow our mental images of God are usually tied to the historic past. God is portrayed as an elderly gentleman living in the dim and distant past. Nothing could be further from the truth.

God is ALWAYS CONTEMPORARY. He is the God of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He is at one and the same time, the God of the past, the present, and the future. He is in the eternal NOW. **God is the GOD OF THE NOW. He is the God of the eternal future!**

Our tendency to tie ourselves to the past and hold to old fashioned concepts and methods restricts and limits our effectiveness enormously. Our message is unchanged and unchanging, but our methods should relate to our times.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

1. Please give five characteristics of the early church model.

2. The early church was a "culturally appropriate model".

A: Please state three things which show this to be so.

B: Please state three things which would make a church in your nation more culturally appropriate.

Chapter Six

A “CHURCH PLANTING CYCLE”

In this chapter we are going to examine a strategy for Church Planting based on the phases of the reproductive process which God built into mankind. In Genesis 1: 26-28. where we have the "first mention" of mankind, God declares His highest intention for Adam and Eve, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth." God's purpose for us, His redeemed children, is to be fruitful and replenish His Kingdom.

THE PROCESS OF REPRODUCTION. Gen. 1: 26-28.

Man (kind) was designed and ordained to be fruitful and reproduce. God designed them to accomplish this through cooperative effort. God established a pattern, a cycle, or process which is built into nature :-

- 1: Conception.
- 2: Pregnancy.
- 3: Birth.
- 4: Growth.
- 5: Reproduction.

1: THE CONCEPTION PHASE. -(GETTING THE VISION)

HERE ARE SOME DEFINITIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS :-

TO CONCEIVE. "To become pregnant with." (usually relating to physical reproduction.)

Can also mean to get an idea, or to receive inspiration.

CONCEPTION.

A: To conceive, or become pregnant.

B: To become inspired with an idea, or plan.

C: To gain a thorough understanding. (e.g. "Can you **conceive** what this might mean?")

CONCEIVABLE.

Able to be grasped or imagined.

In terms of Church Planting, it means that God plants an idea into our spirit. He inspires us with the desire and determination to plant a new church. He

imparts to us the inspiration and incentive. The idea and desire to plant a new church is "born within us" by God's Spirit.

SOME BIBLICAL IMPLICATIONS:

MAN WAS DESIGNED AND ORDAINED TO BE FRUITFUL. Gen. 1: 26 - 28.

A: DESIGNED TO REPRODUCE.

God designed the anatomy and physiology of mankind, both male and female, to complement each other in the process of reproduction. The very design of our physical being indicates the importance of this particular function.

B: DISPOSITION TO REPRODUCE.

God designed and installed the "sex drive" within the mental, emotional, and physical system of man to ensure his continuing desire to reproduce himself.

C: DESIRE TO REPRODUCE,- " AFTER HIS OWN KIND". Gen. 1: 11,12. God designed every seed, including the seed of man, to reproduce after its own kind and in its own likeness and image. We see in Gen. 5:3. that "*Adam begot Seth, ...after his image*".

D: DECISION TO REPRODUCE.

God designed the reproduction process to be subject to the will or decision of man and woman. This principle introduces the idea of family planning. The human will must be involved in the process. A decision must be made and then invoked.

E: DETERMINATION TO REPRODUCE.

Sometimes determination must also play a part, especially when for some reason conception does not occur normally or within a reasonable time span.

In the Bible, barrenness was usually seen to be an abnormality and was even thought to be a curse and a reproach. But it is a reproach which God wants to help us overcome, as per Isaiah. 54: 1-4.

*"Sing and rejoice O barren, You who have not borne! Break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not labored with child. For more shall be the children of the desolate Than the children of the married woman says the Lord.
V.4b. For you will forget the shame of your youth and will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore.
V.5. For the Lord is your husband."*

HERE ARE SOME REASONS WHY A PARTICULAR CHURCH MAY NOT BE REPRODUCING.

- A: TOO COMFORTABLE, - WON'T MAKE THE SACRIFICE.
- B: IMMATURITY. (a measure of maturity is required to bear children.)
- C: IMPOTENCE, OR BARRENNESS. (lack of reproductive strength)
- D: SICKNESS OR ILL HEALTH make child bearing impossible.
- E: WRONG CONCEPT OF WHAT IS REQUIRED TO PLANT ONE.

SOME FURTHER IMPLICATIONS.

- a: Producing a child takes time to accomplish.
- b: Requires cooperative effort.
- c: The potential parents should "count the cost."
- d: They must both accept responsibility for the child.
- e: Such a project calls for careful advanced planning.

RELATING THE ANALOGY TO THE CHURCH.

- a: It was planned from eternity.
- b: God counted the cost. - the life of His only Son. (John. 3:16.)
- c: He paid the price. -God gave His Son, —Christ gave His life.
- d: Jesus is building His Church. Matt. 16:18.
- e: He requires our cooperation.

CONCEIVING THE VISION. (THE ORIGINAL INSPIRATION.)

A: THE VISION COMES FROM GOD.

He is the author, architect and builder of the Church. He plants the desire in our spirit even as he inspired David and Solomon to build the Temple.

B: IT USUALLY COMES IN RESPONSE TO PRAYER.

The inspiration to plant a new congregation usually comes to those who are prayerfully concerned about the growth and development of God's Kingdom.

C: IS CONCEIVED IN OUR SPIRIT, - FROM GOD'S SPIRIT.

The original inspiration is a spiritual one which is conceived in our spirit. As we begin to focus the vision, prayerfully thinking about it, the vision begins to fill our mind and emotions too so that our whole being becomes involved in the excited anticipation of its fulfillment.

D: SOMETIMES AS A "BURDEN." (DEEP CONCERN FOR)

The vision frequently comes as a deep concern, or burden, for the plight of the lost. We become deeply aware of a certain place and the Holy Spirit begins to burden us for the spiritual needs of the population there. This burden usually drives us to earnest and consistent prayer for the particular place.

E: SOMETIMES AS AN EXCITING CONCEPT. (IDEA)

At other times the call comes as an exciting challenge rather than a deep burden. The Holy Spirit excites our spirit with the potential for spiritual results. The more we think about it, the more excited we become.

F: OFTEN AS A "PICTURE" IN OUR SPIRIT.

I find that God often sows a "prophetic picture" into our spirit of what can happen in a certain place if we cooperate with God in faith. The more we think and pray about the possibilities, the more clearly the picture becomes focused in our mind and heart. Sometimes we can even receive prophetic awareness of specific things which will take place as we walk before God in faith and obedience. The more clearly we can focus this picture, the better prepared we can be for what God wants to accomplish there.

G: PRAYERFUL MEDITATION WILL USUALLY DEVELOP THE PICTURE.

Rather than allowing our natural imagination to run riot we need to ensure that we allow our anticipation to focus and clarify in an environment of deeply prayerful meditation. Someone said, "unbelief is the dark room where we develop our negatives." But we might also say that prayerful meditation is the atmosphere in which all our positive dreams develop.

H: EPH. 3:20. -"ABOVE ALL YOU CAN ASK OR IMAGINE."

As you prayerfully anticipate the fulfillment of the vision, remember that *"God is able to do far more exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or even imagine, according to the power which works within us."*

I: STAY CLOSE TO GOD. - DON'T LET IMAGINATION RUN RIOT.

There is often a fine line between faith and presumptive imaginations. The thing which preserves us from getting into the realm of speculative imaginings is staying humble, submissive, and close to God and His Word. He will enable you to go to the sharp edges of faith's possibilities, but preserve you from running over into the dangerous territory of vivid imaginations.

THINK:

A: WHAT "VISION" DO YOU HAVE FOR CHURCH PLANTING?

B: WHAT DOES THAT CHURCH LOOK LIKE?

C: HOW CAN YOU MORE CLEARLY VISUALIZE IT?

2: THE PREGNANCY STAGE.

During which the Vision "incubates" within your spirit. You carry the vision around inside you wherever you are. It is developing, forming, growing like a child within you. You think it through, pray over it, visualize it, speak it into being.

This also the period when all your pre-planning must be done. When solid preparations should be made. You need to prayerfully formulate a "check list" of every relevant item and then go through it carefully, endeavoring to anticipate every possible requirement. (Once you have actually planted a church, all this will become so much easier the next time.)

1: EXAMINING THE PROPOSITION.

Interrogate yourself with pointed questions such as the following :-

1. WHY START A NEW CHURCH?

Are there not sufficient churches already in that area? If so, why do you want to plant another one?

2. WHO IS THE TARGET GROUP?

What part of the population are you specifically aiming to reach? What particular emphasis will you present which will uniquely meet their needs?

3. WHAT KIND OF CHURCH DO YOU PLAN TO START?

Depending somewhat on the particular people group you plan to reach, what style of church do you plan and how will it be uniquely suitable to that specific population group?

4. WITH WHOM WILL YOU PLANT IT?

It is generally advisable to have a "Church Planting team", rather than one person, or one family. A team usually offers much more potential and has a far greater prospect of success. There is a wider variety of gifting

available. There is more strength and encouragement. There is often greater wisdom in a dedicated team than in an individual.

5. HOW AND WHEN WILL YOU START IT?

What style of approach will you use? e.g. a Crusade, house meetings, or personal evangelism?

6. WHAT ASSISTANCE WILL YOU NEED?

There are two main areas in which you may need assistance.

A: Personnel. What kind of ministries would it be helpful for you to have working alongside you? Do you know any people, gifted in these areas who may be available to help you and work with you?

B: Financial support. How do you foresee your financial needs being met? Is there a supporting church or group who will stand with you? Do you plan to find employment through which to support yourself?

7. HOW CAN OTHERS BECOME INVOLVED?

There may be ways in which people, not necessarily part of your team, yet with very real ways in which they can assist and encourage you.

2: FOCUSING YOUR VISION AND GOALS.

1. WHO ARE YOU TRYING TO REACH?

If you try to reach everybody, you may not reach anybody. Be specific. Your target group may be determined by :-

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION.

NATIONALITY. e.g. The Korean population of Berlin.

ETHNIC IDENTITY. e.g.- A specific tribal group in a given region.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION. e.g. - Muslims living in Sydney, Australia.

GROUP IDENTITY. e.g. Filipino maids in Singapore.

ECONOMIC STATUS. e.g. A "people group" identified by economic conditions.

Paul recognized and respected cultural and group distinctives 1 Cor. 9 :19 - 23.

V. 20. To the Jews, I became as a Jew.

V.21. To those outside the Law, I became as one outside the Law.

V.22. To the weak, I became as weak.

I am made all things to all men, that by all means I might save some.

Acts. 15: 19,20. Converts should be required to forsake as little cultural identity as possible.

THINK:

- A: WHAT KIND OF CULTURAL IDENTIFIERS MAY BE LEFT INTACT?
- B: WHAT KIND OF CULTURAL PRACTICES SHOULD BE FORSAKEN?
- C: HOW MAY THIS CHANGE BEST BE EFFECTED?

2. WHAT NEEDS ARE YOU SEEKING TO MEET?

Each target group has its particular felt needs. How will you discover them?

- A: By adequately researching the group and their community.
- B: By living amongst them and observing them.
- C: By identifying yourself with them. (The Incarnational concept)
- D: By conducting a community survey amongst them.

"THE GOSPEL" literally means, "THE GOOD NEWS." What would be "GOOD NEWS" FOR THIS PARTICULAR PEOPLE?

3. HOW DO YOU PLAN TO MEET THOSE NEEDS?

- A: By bringing the **GOOD NEWS** of the Gospel.

Make your presentation as positive as possible. Major on the positives.

Major on those aspects of the Gospel which are particularly relevant to the felt needs of that people.

e.g Some people groups have an extremely poor self image and almost no sense of self worth. Therefore major on the fact that God created ALL MEN in His own image and likeness and that Christ has come to restore that image in us. Emphasize the confidence and well being of the New Creation.

- B: Learn as much as you can of skills which will help meet felt-needs.

In areas where general health is poor, medical and dental teams might be brought in for short term missions which will pave the way and establish credibility for the associated Gospel team.

I know of an extremely effective ministry in Southern Africa which specializes in drilling wells to bring fresh water supplies to villages. While the drilling is taking place, Gospel services are also conducted and thousands are confessing Christ as Saviour.

- C: Include team members qualified to meet felt-needs.

4: DESIGNING YOUR PLANTING STRATEGY.

A: GATHER AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE.

B: PRAYERFULLY "BRAIN-STORM" THE CHALLENGING ISSUES.

Brainstorm with your covering group, elders, or mission leaders.

C: ARRANGE THE STEPS IN LOGICAL SEQUENCE.

Make an exhaustive list of everything which needs to be done. Then go through it and prioritize every item to get everything into a logical sequence and therefore ensure that every task is tackled in the correct sequence time wise.

D: PLAN YOUR "PROPHETIC CALENDAR."

Your "prophetic calendar" is compiled by prayerfully endeavoring to "anticipate and visualize" WHEN certain steps should happen.

E: DO A REALITY CHECK.

Is this plan truly feasible? Bring out every thing which could possibly hinder or prevent the success of the project. Prayerfully discover the solution. Then make a list of every positive indication as to why this event will succeed. Major on this list in your thinking, talking, and planning.

Are there any weak areas?

If so, how can we eliminate them?

5: DETERMINING YOUR MINISTRY MODEL.

A: DETERMINE YOUR MOST APPROPRIATE MINISTRY METHOD.

Consider your own ministry gifting. e.g Crusade evangelism, House meetings, Personal evangelism etc.

Consider the prevailing political, or religious situation.

Consider the personnel, equipment, finances, which are available to you.

B: MAKE IT APPROPRIATE TO YOUR INTENDED TARGET GROUP.

e.g Culturally appropriate. Religiously fitting. Contemporary suitability.

C: DETERMINE THE PROGRESSIVE PHASES OF YOUR PLAN, AND HOW TO LINK THEM TOGETHER.

The more detailed planning you can do before the actual launching of the project, the less likely you are to encounter unforeseen problems once you are involved in the actual program.

For the sake of simplicity and to give ourselves a plan which we can use effectively regardless of what specific method of Church Planting we may use, let us presume that there are five development phases in the planting of a new congregation.

We need to look carefully at each of these, examining each one in detail, prayerfully considering what we can do to effectively implement each phase.

If possible, we need to tackle each of these phases in the sequence that is suggested here. If we consider the analogy of erecting a building we know that there is a sequence that must be followed.

This would include :-

- a: The initial intention to build.
- b: Determine appropriate type of building.
- c: Design the building, plans, specifications, approvals.
- d: Obtain suitable building site.
- e: Commence building operations.
 - Excavating the foundations.
 - Laying the foundations.
 - Erection of building commences.
 - Roof in place.
 - Internal fixtures and fittings in place.

In the same manner, our evangelistic strategy must be planned and implemented in an appropriate sequence e.g.

Take into account the following five probable phases :

1: PRE-EVANGELISM.

Making friends, discovering needs.
Building a list of contacts.

I

2: EVANGELISM.

Recruiting for the Kingdom.
Using various forms of evangelism.

I

3: ASSIMILATION.

Introducing them into the Church.
Assimilating them into the Body.

I

4: GROWTH.

Placing in Cell Care Groups.
Discipling and training.

I

5: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT.

Mentoring potential leaders.
Affording leadership development opportunities.

3: THE BIRTH PHASE.

-Bringing the Church into being.

"My little children, for whom I suffer birth pangs, until Christ be formed in you."

Paul. (Gal. 4:19.)

Spiritual breakthrough

There are numerous ways in which Church Planting involves a process of travail, or an undergoing of spiritual birth pains. The Holy Spirit actually births new converts and new congregations and we play the role of spiritual mid-wives. However, in doing so we also experience certain travail and birth pains. Just as a husband, in the natural, may empathetically experience similar discomforts as his wife for whom he feels so deeply, so we too may experience the birthing pangs of the Holy Spirit.

From planning to travailing

In the previous section we mentioned the imperative need to plan carefully. The more thorough your planning, the less likely you will be to make mistakes in the actual process of planting. Someone has said, "Plan as though everything depended on your planning, but work knowing everything depends on God." A church cannot be planted merely by planning and implementing those plans. There is always a spiritual factor involved that is akin to a birthing process. The Apostle Paul told the Galatians that he "suffered birth pangs" on their behalf.

Birth is always preceded by travail

"For as soon as Zion travailed (was in labour) she brought forth." (Isa 66:8)

Just as a woman inevitably experiences the pains preceding the birth of her child, so a period of travail precedes the spiritual birthing of a person or a church. Prospective church planters must learn how to travail in prayer on behalf of the community they have targeted.

This "birthing" is a spiritual activity that is usually accomplished through intercessory prayer. From the moment of conception the whole project must be surrounded with prayer. Every stage of development must be bathed in earnest prayer. Each plan and strategy must be conceived in prayer. When the time for the actual launch comes, prayer activity must be increased and intensified. Spiritual warfare must be successfully waged against the spirits that will inevitably try to hinder or totally prevent the planting of a new church in their territory. There are frequently battles that must be fought and won

before one can successfully establish an outpost of the Kingdom of God, i.e. a local church.

Travail, means :- Painful effort, Pains of childbirth. Descriptive of :-

- **Child birth pains. Gen. 38:27.**

"And it came to pass, in the time of her travail, twins were in her womb."

- **Messiah's birth pains. Isa. 53:11.**

"He shall see the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

This prophecy relates to the birth pains that Jesus would experience when He suffered to bring to birth God's great redemption. His sufferings on the cross were the birth pains He endured to bring forth God's salvation to a dying world. His redemptive sufferings were indescribable and unspeakable yet the prophet predicts that when the fullest results of that redemptive suffering are realized, Messiah will be eminently rewarded. He will be fully satisfied.

- **Church Planter's concern. Gal. 4:19.**

"My little children, for who I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."

The Apostle Paul, as a missionary evangelist church planter, travailed in birth pains for the converts and new churches God brought into being through his labors. Paul underwent spiritual travail in order to proclaim the Gospel, see people brought to God and establish new communities of believers.

- **Tent makers labors. 1 Thess. 2:9. 2 Thess. 3:8.**

"For you remember brethren our labor and travail as we preached the Gospel unto you."

Tent makers, those sacrificial ministers who support themselves through secular work whilst preaching the Gospel and planting churches, experience a special kind of travail. Their physical labors are a part of the price they pay in addition to the spiritual strength they invest in their arduous and demanding task.

- **Creation's re-birth. Rom. 8:22.**

"The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now."

Paul clearly intimates that all creation will experience the trauma of a birthing process when God ultimately brings forth His Kingdom upon this earth.

Before we discuss some of the methods we may employ in planting a church, we need to remind ourselves that there are very real and vitally necessary spiritual activities involved in "birthing a church". In a very real sense we

travail in prayer and spiritual warfare and if this is not successfully accomplished then the Church Planting exercise will not be a success.

God and man work together

In the natural process of child birth we witness the phenomena of God and man working together to birth a new life. Without God's genius, reproduction is impossible. But man and woman must also play their part. So it is with the work of God's Kingdom too. Only God can cause spiritual reproduction but He chooses to use human instruments too. We must do all we can and Almighty God will do those things that we cannot.

1. MEETING AND BE-FRIENDING THE PEOPLE.

Determine to meet the people and to "be friendly".

"He who would have friends, must show himself to be friendly."

Prov. 18 : 24.

In the Bible, "friend" can mean "confidential advisor." see. Gen. 26 :26.

It was used as a salutation, whether to friend or foe. Matt. 22 :12. 26:50.

When Jesus commissioned His disciples He told them *"Whatever house you enter, first say Peace, (Shalom) to this house."* Lk. 10 : 5. In other words, initially presume everyone to be your friend.

2. CONDUCT A COMMUNITY SURVEY.

Be prepared to go from door to door.

Aim to establish a friendly rapport with each family.

Conduct a "discovering needs survey."

Be prepared to pray for peoples needs on the spot.

3. DEVELOP YOUR CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE.

Most leaders have "circles of influence." Interests and skills in common with others.

Discover what your circles are. Develop your skills. Offer your help.

Some of your skills may be :-

Helping neighbors.

Coaching a sports club.

Teaching guitar lessons.

Teaching English.

Teaching typing.

Teaching basic computer skills.

Helping solo parents.

Helping the aged.

4. BECOME PART OF THE COMMUNITY.

Go where the people are. Join in their activities.

Jesus did not come to condemn people but to save them.

5. USE THE HOUSE MEETING STRATEGY.

The cell group system is indispensable to the strong development of a local church. Many of those things which the New Testament commands us to do for each other cannot be accomplished except in small groups.

Jesus built a small group of 12 disciples.

Let your first group meeting become a model for future cell groups.

DEVELOP CELL GROUP LEADERS.

Teach and train by observation, participation, involvement.

6. COMMENCE FELLOWSHIP GATHERINGS.

A: CELEBRATION. Praise and worship. Ministry to God.

This is your public gathering to which you invite pre-Christians as well as your regular congregation. Keep this meeting bright, positive, powerful, and dynamic. If you have musicians, aim to form a good music group, playing joyful and triumphant music which will attract pre-Christians.

B: EDIFICATION. Teaching and prayers.

This is generally a believers' meeting where solid biblical teaching can be given and united prayers can be conducted.

C: EVANGELISM. Provoke non-believers to jealousy.

Evangelism can occur in two main arenas :-

- 1: Outside activities. Taking the message to the people where they are.
- 2: Evangelistic meetings to which pre-Christians may be brought.

Embrace some "Cell group principles." e.g :-

- Informality. To encourage participation by pre-Christians.
- Low "religious" content.
- Cultural authenticity.
- Ethnic appropriateness.
- Contemporary suitability.
- Keep the meetings bright, happy, challenging and open to the supernatural.

7. FORM THE CELL GROUPS.

Develop a Cell Group ethos from the beginning. Informal, non-religious, caring.

(More about this in the "Growth Stage.")

4: THE GROWTH PHASE.

"Healthy growth has to be more than merely numerical. Imagine a person who only develops in physical size, but not mentally, emotionally or spiritually."

The development and growth of Jesus was multi-faceted and balanced. *He grew in wisdom and stature, in favor with God and with man.*" Luke. 2: 52.

1: THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY LEADERSHIP.

This factor can never be underestimated. The people will never rise above the level of their leaders.

THE ULTIMATE INDICATION OF GOOD LEADERSHIP IS PRODUCING OTHER LEADERS.

Demands leadership training and mentoring.

A: COMMUNICATE CONFIDENCE.

"Potential Leaders will generally rise to the level of your expectation of them."

B: HELP THEM REALIZE THAT FAILURE IS NOT FATAL.

Some of God's finest leaders had overcome failure. e.g Moses, David, Peter.

C: CELEBRATE SMALL WINS.

"Affirmation is the foundation of change."

D: PROVIDE EFFECTIVE COACHING.

Eph.4:11. Pastors and teachers should be perfecting, (Katatimos,= adjusting, - to put into functioning order as the setting of a broken leg, or the mending of a torn net.) the saints to do the work of the ministry.

E: PROVIDE A LEADERSHIP FRATERNITY.

Where leaders can interact, Leadership can be modeled.- it must be caught, and taught.

Skill training. Mutual encouragement. Fraternal relationship and fellowship. Team spirit.

2: IMPLEMENT THE "FOLLOW UP" STRATEGIES.

A: Advance preparations are essential.

Establish the method you will employ. Obtain suitable materials.

B: Mobilize people to help.

C: Keep the vision before the people.

D: Lead by example.

3: DEVELOP AN EXPANDING NET-WORK OF CELL GROUPS.

The Cell Group Church is the CHURCH OF THE FUTURE.

We can only fulfill all we are commanded to do for each other in the context of small groups. Cell Groups are discipleship forming units.

A: WHERE PEOPLE LOVE, LEARN, SERVE, AND REACH OTHERS.

B: TRAINING AND CULTIVATION OF "APPRENTICES" TAKES PLACE.

C: FORM FISHING POOLS. "Pools of people" in which we can "fish".

Cell groups have two main functions, pastoral and evangelistic. The pastoral function is fulfilled in the mutual caring of members each for the others in practical as well as spiritual areas. However, they should also be evangelistic in nature providing an informal and friendly venue to which non Christians may be brought. The informality of a small group, meeting in a house venue, provides an atmosphere conducive to new persons who feel much more at home and at ease than they might in the institutional atmosphere of a large church.

D: ENSURE THAT GROUP MULTIPLICATION HAPPENS.

Build in the expansion factor right from the very beginning. Make sure that every group realizes that they must plan for, and move towards growth resulting in the planting other groups. Once a group reaches say 12 or fifteen members it might be the appropriate time to split that group into two, effectively forming a new cell group. Such growth expansion should be warmly encouraged and fostered at all times.

4: FOCUSING ON TARGET GROUPS.

There are special groups of people in every community who have a specific need as their common denominator. One of the secrets of church growth is to "find such needs and begin to meet them."

A: CULTIVATE COMPASSION MINISTRIES.

Working with under privileged groups.

Many years ago, in an Australian church of which I was pastor, God gave us a break through into the prostitutes of our city. Numbers of them were gloriously saved and delivered.

There are drug and alcohol dependent people you can reach.

The deaf population can be reached.

B: FORM SUPPORT/ RECOVERY GROUPS.

Some types of need require a support group to help them recover. This is clearly the case with alcoholics.

Persons who have suffered various forms of nervous break down or Burnout, need people who have experienced and recovered from this to help them.

5: INCREASE EVANGELISTIC EFFECTIVENESS.

A: REACHING THE FAMILIES AND ASSOCIATES.

New believers must be encouraged to maintain links with their family members and former associates in order to win them to Christ. This is frequently called "OIKOS EVANGELISM". The Greek word "oikos" is translated "family, kindred, or household." It refers to the close associates of the new believer. Andrew is an example of this style of evangelism. *"One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. **He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, We have found the Messiah.**"* (John. 1: 40, 41.)

B: PROVIDE TRAINING IN METHODS OF EVANGELISM.

From the very commencement of the new congregation emphasis must be placed on the importance of evangelism, and training must be offered in various forms of personal evangelism. Unless the members are properly trained and motivated no growth will transpire. (See the manual, "**You can be a real winner**", supplied with this Course.)

C: ORGANIZE EVANGELISTIC ACTIVITIES AND OUTREACHES.

Having provided adequate training in evangelism, the leadership must now organize evangelistic activities in which the members can engage.

6: ASSIMILATE AND MOBILIZE NEWCOMERS.

A: HELP THEM FIND A SUITABLE GROUP AFFILIATION.

New believers must be encouraged to join with suitable groups and activities that will afford them scope in productive ministry.

B: DISCOVER AND DEVELOP THEIR LATENT MINISTRY GIFTINGS.

Special teaching must be given on the various ministry giftings which God has given and members must be helped to identify their proper and appropriate role in ministry. (Romans. 12. 1 Cor. 12: 7-11. Eph. 4 : 11, 12.)

7: SHARPEN, AND/OR REPLACE EXISTING MINISTRIES.

A: PRUNING FOR GREATER EFFECTIVENESS. John. 15:2.

"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch which bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."

The ministries within the local church must be kept as effective and productive as possible. This may entail :-

- Replacing some existing ministries.
- Training and appointing new ones.
- Ensuring that training classes are functioning at all times.
- Encouraging a constant flow of potential leaders.
- Finding roles and opportunities for leadership expression.

5: THE REPRODUCTION PHASE.

One of the clearest indications of having attained a measure of maturity, having grown beyond childhood, adolescence and puberty, is the onset of reproduction capabilities.

A person has not yet reached maturity if still incapable of reproducing.
A church has not yet reached spiritual maturity if it is not 'reproducing after its kind'.

When is the reproduction potential introduced? At the moment of conception!
But a growth process towards maturity must occur before that potential can be expected to function. So every church has the potential to reproduce, but only those which have moved on to the required maturity will actually do so.

The Church is designed by God to Grow and reproduce Churches.

1: CULTIVATE COMMITMENT TO REPRODUCTION.

From the earliest possible time members should be taught and made to understand that the church has a commitment to plant other congregations. They should grow with this awareness in mind.

2: IDENTIFY POTENTIAL HARVESTS.

The local church should always be looking for potential harvest areas in which evangelism can occur and a new congregation planted. This should occur in the "Jerusalem", - adjacent surrounding area. In its "Judea and Samaria", - somewhat further afield. And to the "uttermost parts of the earth", a cross cultural, missions program beyond our national borders.

3: ENCOURAGE EVANGELISM BY EVERY POSSIBLE MEANS.

4: KEEP THE VISION BEFORE THE PEOPLE.

Church members should be consistently reminded of the missions vision of their church. They should not be allowed to become introspective and introvert but always aware of those fields which are white already unto harvest.

5: SECURE CONGREGATIONAL COMMITMENT TO REPRODUCTION.

(I am grateful to Dr. Robert Logan of Strategic Ministries Inc California . U.S.A. for originally sharing these life cycle concepts with me and encouraging me to adapt and use them.)

Chapter Seven

PROPHETIC VISIONING

“Living in God’s future”

We have been examining some of the basic principles employed in planning a project, now I want to introduce a further aspect required in the planning of spiritual projects. I refer to “prophetic visioning”, which is :-

the prayerful projection of our spirit man into the future to “sense” what God has in store for us.

In the process of natural planning we rely on the information received by our natural senses. In the process of prophetic visioning we prayerfully plug into the concept that God conveys to our spiritual senses. In the natural we see the visible. In the prophetic mode we “*see the invisible*”. (Heb 11:27)

In the story of Elisha at Dothan we see an example of someone’s vision being enlarged from the natural to the prophetic.

II Ki 6:17

17 And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (NIV)

Initially the young man could only perceive what his natural senses told him. His physical sight was focused upon the problem before him. All that he could see was the huge enemy army that surrounded he and Elisha. So the prophet prayed for him. “Lord open the

(spiritual) eyes of the young man.” After which he saw what God saw, instead of only that which his natural senses told him. Effective leaders need spiritual (prophetic) vision to see the future as God sees it.

Prayerfully project your “Spirit man”

into the future by faith.

Believe to “see” what

God wants to accomplish through you.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROPHETIC VISIONING AND WISHFUL THINKING.

WISHFUL THINKING, or day dreaming, involves :-

- a: Indulging in flights of fancy.
- b: Ultra idealistic thinking.
- c: Ego-centric fantasy.
- d: Hyper vivid imagination.

PROPHETIC VISIONING is :-

- a: Prayerfully approached.
- b: Cautiously considered.
- c: Corporately confirmed.
- d: Responsibly undertaken.

THINK:

What do you believe God wants to accomplish through you in the next five years?

How do you “see” your church, five years from now, God willing?

INITIATING A PARADIGM SHIFT

A paradigm is a grid or pattern through which we perceive things. It is a bias towards which we lean in our interpretation of issues. It is a pattern of the shape we think things ought to be. A particular lens through which we view life. It derives from the Greek word *paradeigma*, which means pattern or example. It is frequently adopted from our:-

- Ethnic identity.

- Cultural background.
- Religious heritage.
- Social station.
- Political perception.

Within our religious package we frequently embrace a doctrinal pattern, a denominational preference, a regional influence, (Western world, African, Asian, Latin American) and a national perspective. (e.g. British, American, Chinese, Indian, African, etc)

Many people are limited and restricted by their paradigm perception. They are slow to believe that any concept other than their own will be effective. Most people are reticent to accept any suggestion of change from the way they have always believed that things should be done.

Before we can ever **act** differently, we must **think** differently. We need a paradigm shift, a change in the way we view things.

CHARTING A PROPHETIC VISION.

Here is an intriguing scripture that alludes to prophetic guidance.

Isa 30:20-21

*20 Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, **your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them.***

*21 **Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."** (NIV)*

Firstly God promises Israel teachers, "in front of your own eyes". Teachers who can give guidance and direction, telling us which way we should go.

Then, when we have begun to follow those directions, a voice behind us issuing warnings at any time we are likely to deviate from God's way. Should we veer to the left or the right, a voice will correct us bringing us back on to the right path. God never forces anyone in His direction. His quiet yet persistent voice calls to us as a voice from behind endeavoring to save us from straying from the straight path.

One of the tribes of Israel, the sons of Issachar, had a special prophetic anointing.

1 Chr 12:32

32 *men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do-- 200 chiefs, with all their relatives under their command; (NIV)*

They not only understood the times in which they lived, they also “knew” (prophetically) what Israel ought to do in the light of those times. They were like God’s intelligence corps. The sons of Issachar marched directly behind the tribe of Judah, obviously giving them direction from behind.

We have a fine example of this guidance process in the case of Israel’s journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. Whenever Israel marched in God’s purposes, the tribe of Judah took the lead, closely followed by the sons of Issachar.

Num 10:14-15. Judah marched first, followed by Issachar.

14 The divisions of the camp of Judah went first, under their standard. Nahshon son of Amminadab was in command.

15 Nethanel son of Zuar was over the division of the tribe of Issachar, (NIV)

Kingdom strategy needs to be :-

1: SPIRITUALLY CONCEIVED.

We are comprised of spirit, intellect, emotions.

God speaks initially into our spirit.

Not our intellect or emotions.

We need to proceed in the spirit, not turning to the right nor the left.

Avoiding the extremes of either the intellect or the emotions.

2: BIBLICALLY AUTHENTICATED.

Spiritual guidance can be somewhat subjective, (based on a persons emotions or pre-conceived ideas). Therefore we need to immediately expose that guidance to an objective source, (undistorted by personal feelings or bias).

The Bible is the first such source to which we must always turn. Whenever you sense that you have received something from God, go to Him immediately, your bible before you and ask Him to either confirm or deny your leading. God is able to speak to you, from His Word, in all manner of ways. It is fascinating at times to discover the unique methods He uses to convey His wisdom to you personally through the pages of His Word.

3: CORPORATELY CONFIRMED.

The second safeguard for confirming that your guidance is truly from God is the prayerfully considered opinion of your spiritual peers. Every leader needs a circle of peers to whom he can turn at any time for added wisdom and guidance. God is always willing to confirm His will.

Prov 11:14

14 Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety. (KJV)

Prov 24:6-7

6 *For by wise guidance you will wage war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.*

7 *Wisdom is too high for a fool, He does not open his mouth in the gate.*
(NAS)

Another rendering of V. 7. is *“matters of wisdom are beyond the grasp of a stubborn fool. At the city gate, (where the wise elders gather) he does not open his mouth”.* (ask for guidance).

This principle is particularly pertinent in respect of prophetic issues which are frequently subjective in nature and can be ambiguous to the spiritually immature. The bible advocates that a prophetic statement should always be submitted to those other prophets who are present for their collective consideration and judgment.

1 Cor 14:29-30. Let other prophets judge.

29 *Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.*

30 *And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop.* (NIV)

Another version, (GOD’S WORD by World Publishing, Michigan) renders it in this manner.

“Two or three people should speak what God has revealed. Everyone else should decide whether what each person said is right or wrong. If God reveals something to another person who is seated, the first speaker should be silent”.

The bible indicates that “The mind of Christ” is not entrusted to a lone individual but rather to a group of people. Paul says, “But WE have the mind of Christ”. (plural)

1 Cor 2:16

16 *“For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?” But **we** have the mind of Christ.* (NIV)

Therefore when any individual feels they have the mind of Christ on a certain matter they should submit their revelation to a number of spiritual persons for their scrutiny and judgment. The more serious a matter, the more necessary that it be submitted to one’s spiritual mentors for their advice.

Deut 17:6. Serious matters required more than one witness.

6 *On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.* (NIV)

2 Cor 13:1

1 This will be my third visit to you. "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." (NIV)

Prov 20:18

18 Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance. (NIV)

4: REALISTICALLY ASSESSED.

Every prophetic vision should be realistically assessed (realism: an awareness and acceptance of things as they really are as distinct from the abstract, ideal, or imagined.)

(assess: to judge the worth or importance, the validity and merit of a matter)

5: RESPONSIBLY DEVELOPED.

The bible reveals a principle by which God usually accomplishes things, it is "change by transition or process".

Isa 28:10 Change transpires a little at a time.

10 For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little. (ASV)

2 Cor 3:18. God initiates change gradually.

18 But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit. (ASV)

God is rarely in a hurry to accomplish anything. Most of what He does is accomplished little by little. Great oak trees do not grow to maturity overnight. They take many years to reach their state of ultimate maturity, growing little by little.

6: PROPHETICALLY INCLINED.

A prophetic vision or word from God is usually forward looking, focused on the future rather than the past.

"Forget what happened in the past, and do not dwell on events from long ago. I am going to do something new. It is already happening. Don't you recognize it?" Isa 43: 18,19.

Jer 29:11

11 *For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (NIV)*

1 Chr 28:11-12

11 *Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico of the temple, its buildings, its storerooms, its upper parts, its inner rooms and the place of atonement.*

12 **He gave him the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the LORD and all the surrounding rooms,** *for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things. (NIV)*

7: FAITH INSPIRED AND ENDOWED.

Visions and plans that come from God are not only inspired by faith, they are endowed with faith. God does not only inspire the beginnings of something, He supplies the faith to continue and complete the project. God never begins anything that He does not intend to finish. If He is in your plans they will ultimately be perfectly fulfilled.

Phil 1:6

6 *being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (NIV)*

Ps 138:8

8 *The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands. (KJV)*

POWER SHIFT. "Prophetic actioning".

Once we have achieved a "paradigm shift", i.e. a change of perception, we should begin to DO things differently too. We call this "Prophetic actioning."

“Do today what you would need to do if your church were twice as large.”

Begin to act and live now as you would need to if your vision were already fulfilled. Live by faith, in God’s future.

“Believe to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living”. ***Psa 27:13.***

Suggestions

a: Obtain a larger building.

If the building in which you are meeting is scarcely large enough to contain the crowd, you will need to obtain a larger one before your church will grow much more. Some church growth experts say that if your building is more than 80% filled there are probably people staying away because it is too crowded for them. Whether this is true or not in your situation it might be true that if you are going to see your congregation double in number you may have to obtain a larger place. If you do so, begin to envision that place filled with people praising and worshipping God. See it with the eyes of faith. See it whenever you pray. Begin to thank God, by faith, for filling the auditorium.

b: Open more small venues.

Instead of finding a considerably larger meeting place, perhaps God will give you a vision for numerous smaller venues. He may want you to plant numbers of house churches throughout your area. Believe God for a “vision”, a picture within your spirit, of the strategy He wants you to follow.

c: Train more workers.

If your church experiences considerable growth, you will need many more workers than you presently have. Therefore you should take a step of faith and begin to select and train the number of workers you will need. Train them for every aspect of ministry that will be needed when your congregation increases in number and you have far more people who need to be cared for and ministered to. Most churches have far too few workers. A small percentage of the people do the major part of the work. You will be able to redress this imbalance when more of your members are trained and prepared for various functions and ministries.

d: Improve the music ministry.

Larger churches usually have a different music ministry than do small ones. They frequently have a healthy number of musicians, with a good variety of instruments. This helps to charge the atmosphere, making it more exciting and attractive to a big crowd. Use your music ministry to cultivate the kind of

environment and atmosphere that is typical of a larger church. The worship will then begin to attract many more people to your church.

e: *Install better administration.* Acts 6:1-7

- 1 *In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.*
- 2 *So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.*
- 3 *Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them*
- 4 *and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."*
- 5 *This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.*
- 6 *They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.*
- 7 *So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. (NIV)*

The Bible clearly shows that competent administration is vital to effective church growth. Problems arising in the early church were solved by the appointment of deacons to handle the organization and administration more efficiently. This gave the apostles more time for prayer and ministry of the Word, resulting in a further acceleration of numerical growth and the addition of a large number of priests.

Take steps of faith to improve your administrative and organizational abilities. Adopt systems and principles of administration that would cope with a larger congregation than you currently have. Put into place, by faith, the personnel and systems that you would need if your church were twice as large. Act in obedience and faith towards God and He will honor your faith.

f: *Lift your service.*

Intensify the celebration component in your services.

Believe God for the kind of exciting atmosphere that usually accompanies a much larger and more dynamic congregation.

Be “seeker sensitive”.

Many small churches unwittingly become introvert and introspective. They develop a small church mentality that is not always attractive or appealing to non-believers. Become sensitive to the perceptions of pre-Christians. Make your services more appealing and meaningful to strangers. Become a “user-friendly” church.

Preach dynamic messages to “more” people.

In a similar manner, preaching to small congregations often develops a style of preaching and communication that is not suitable for a larger crowd. You should determine to preach more powerful and impactful message. Even if your congregation is relatively small, preach as though you were preaching to a much larger congregation. Imagine a good sized crowd before you. Preach with passion, from the heart. This kind of preaching will lend itself to enlarging your congregation.

Be culturally appropriate.

Most of the churches that are growing have adapted themselves to the culture of the people amongst which they are working.

Be contemporary.

King David endeared Himself to God because he “served his generation according to the will of God.”

Acts 13:22

22 *And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, **I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.***

Acts 13:36

36 *For David, after he had **served his own generation by the will of God,** fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: (KJV)*

God wants a people who will understand and communicate effectively with their contemporary peers. There is no special virtue to being archaic and out of date.

Be relevant.

Relevant means, “having a direct bearing on real and current issues.” The church needs to address its message to the issues and problems about which people are most concerned. God and His Word have answers to every human problem. We need to be aware of the basic issues that are causing concern and hurt in people’s lives. Those things that are uppermost in their thoughts and concerns. We need to “scratch them where they are truly itching.” In the words of an old hymn;

*Christ is the answer to my every need.
Christ is the answer, He is my friend indeed.
Problems of life my spirit may assail,
With Christ my Savior, I shall never fail.
For Christ is the answer to my need.*

g: Conserve the harvest.

It is pointless and even immoral, to bring people to Christ but not follow them up adequately in order to consolidate their decision. An outreach, evangelistic program **must** be accompanied by an adequate program of after care. Church members must be trained and prepared to function in such capacities. Here are some of the activities that can be used to conserve the harvest :-

Commence new believers classes.

New believers need to be established in their faith. They need to be taught the scriptural basis of what they have done in committing their lives to God through Christ. A special class should accommodate this need. A class in which all the students are new believers or people who are not yet thoroughly familiar with the biblical basis of their faith. The basic principles of the faith should be communicated to them, not simply for their intellectual retention but so that their lives may be influenced and impacted by them, teaching them to live the Jesus style of life.

Commence mutual interests groups.

New believers also need ample opportunity to fraternize with new Christian friends, particularly those with similar interests and common needs. Men's fellowship, Women's fellowships, Youth groups, Senior citizens meetings, Choir rehearsals, are all common interest groups to which new members may attach themselves.

Determine discipleship procedures.

Provision should be made for the effective discipling of new believers. Our true commission is not to make converts, but to make disciples. Therefore, every new believer must be given opportunity to be discipled and to present their lives to God for His utmost service.

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Chapter Eight

WORKING YOUR PLAN

"For which of you. intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost to see if he has sufficient to finish it?" In case, having laid the foundations and being unable to finish it, all who see it begin to mock him saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish it."

(Luke. 14: 28 - 30.)

Someone has well said, **"If you fail to plan, you plan to fail."**

Another true concept is, **"Plan your work, and work your plan."**

Jesus Himself, in the above Scripture, reminds us that it is folly to embark upon a project without first having sat down to "count the cost" and make sure that you have the potential and ability to complete the task. It is folly to begin something, particularly something which involves the Name of God, without ensuring to the best of your ability that you are well able to complete that project. Jesus said :-

Sit down, (Think.)

Count the cost. (Calculate.)

Build. (Action.)

So the first thing we need to do in the ministry of Church Planting is some very serious thinking as to the feasibility of undertaking the task which is upon our heart. We are going to call this,

Objective planning. (What do we mean by "Objective planning?")

We mean, realistic planning with a specific objective or purpose in view.

It involves clear, serious, realistic, forward planning.

Objective also infers, an impersonal, unbiased and unprejudiced view, free from sentimental, emotional and irrational influences.

All of this is in direct contrast to **Subjective Planning.**

Which is often personal, biased, and prejudiced.

This kind of thinking is often really "wishful thinking."

Looking at things the way you would wish or hope they might be.

This is the thinking of a visionary who is too proud or self confident to subject his ideas or ambitions to others whose view may not be subjectively influenced.

It is a mode of thinking influenced by emotions, feelings and imaginations.

Subjective thoughts and planning are usually unreliable and misleading. They are frequently too emotional, sentimental and unrealistic.

Subjective thinking can sound very "Spiritual."

It is often couched in phrases and clichés like :-

"God will take care of everything."

"The Lord will provide."

"It's all in God's hands, why should I be concerned?"

However, Jesus Himself warns us against this kind of thinking.

He says we should not dismiss any fore-thought or planning.

If a man is about to undertake a large project, the first thing he should do is to sit down and thoroughly think it through. Not subjectively in an irresponsible manner which may say, "Praise God, it's His work after all. He will take care of everything and pay all the bills etc."

He cautions us to plan with a clearly defined objective in view.

To ask ourselves some very practical questions like :-

- **What is my real purpose?**
- **What am I really called to do?**
- **How shall I go about it?**

Please let it be clearly understood that when I encourage careful, objective planning I am in no way suggesting that you should not plan in faith. By all means bring your faith into the vision and plans. Always make room for the GOD FACTOR. But remember too that there is a big difference between faith and presumption. We can be people of faith, but this does not mean that we should be foolish or irresponsible. Proper planning certainly does not need to deny or diminish faith.

I am going to pose five practical questions you must be prepared to ask yourself.

1: Where?

Where do you plan to plant a new church?

What do you really know about the place?

How can you find out everything that it would be helpful to know?

Visit the place. Get some brochures and information on it. Get some books about the place.

Get to know someone who lives there or has lived there.

Create a file on the place and put into it every piece of information you can find.

2: What?

What exactly do you purpose to do there?

If the place in which you plan to do Church Planting is in another nation, you need to get some answers like the following :-

A: What is the Political Climate?

What kind of government? What is its policy towards religion, Christianity, missionaries?

If anti-religious, Are church groups allowed to exist? What restrictions are there upon religious groups?

Would believers be endangered? What penalties might they incur?

Is the government stable or unstable?

What is its relationship with your own nation like?

What type of visa may you be able to obtain?

Can you enter the country as a church worker? Or should you apply as a "tent maker"?

Is it possible to travel freely within the country?

B: What are the Economic Conditions?

What economic conditions prevail?

What is the per capita income of the people?

What is the general standard of living like?

Are food, clothes and living essentials available?

What is the economic condition of believers in that country?

Are they discriminated against economically?

C: Educational Conditions.

What is the literacy rate? Is there a literacy program operating?

What languages are spoken or read?

What Christian literature is available, / permissible.

What printing facilities are there? What is the cost of printing?

3: When?

When would be the best time to launch a Church Planting program?

What time of the year? Season? Weather? Holidays?

When can I realistically hope to get there?

Does God have a special time for us to commence there?

4: How?

How can we most effectively launch this Church Planting project?

Organize a Mass Crusade ?

In which venue? Who will be the preacher? Where could we find the number of helpers needed?

How could we adequately care for the converts who may be won?

Commence a House meeting?

Where? In whose house? Will we need a permit to do so?

Organize a door to door visitation program?

What would our approach be? How could we gain the best response to this?

5: What resources would we need?

A: Personnel.

A team is highly desirable for such a venture.

B: Equipment.

P.A. system. Musical instruments.

C: Financial Support.

- How much will the initial program cost?
- What will be the cost of the ongoing program?
- Where will this financial support come from?

In answering these questions we are :-

- Discovering Needs.
- Determining Objectives.
- Detailing Methods.
- Developing Resources.

From the answers to these, and similar questions, we must make appropriate plans, which must include :-

1: OUR VISION. The long term objective.

2: OUR GOALS. The steps by which we will reach our goal.

**If you don't know where you are going,
any road will get you there!**

What is your Vision?

What is your long term objective?

If you are planning to plant a church, why not stop right now, get a sheet of paper, and commit to writing your LONG TERM VISION for that church.

In writing out your vision, be as specific as you can.

Avoid vague, abstract terms.

Specify where, when, how, what kind, what size.

Describe the picture which God is giving to you of the church you are to plant.

Your Vision should be :-

- God given.

Any project for church planting must be God inspired. If we embark on such a project for any personal or selfish reason there will be a tragic flaw in the very foundations of it which will mar its growth and development.

- Specific.

One of the differences between a Vision and a Goal is the specifics factor.

A Vision does not have specifics built into it.

Someone may say, "my vision is to build a great church."

A Goal has some specifics built into it.

The person may say, "My goal is to build a church of 500 members in MYTOWN in the next five years."

- Measurable.

Our plan must have factors which allow us to accurately measure progress.

These will include :-

- **Numbers.** How many people are you believing to win?

- **Time.** Over what time period do you plan to achieve this?

- **Budget.** How much do you estimate that this will cost?

- Communicable.

Your plan must be specific and clear enough to be communicated :-

A: To your associates and fellow workers.

B: To your congregation.

- Realistic.

Even faith goals must be realistic.

The faith factor will greatly increase your planned achievement but it will not take it beyond the realm of realism.

- **Achievable.**

If you have a huge vision, it is still advisable to break it down into smaller, achievable pieces.

Divide your vision into long term and short term goals.

Let your ultimate vision be your long term goal.

Then divide it into short term goals.

What are your Goals?

In considering the practical steps which must be taken to implement and fulfill your vision you must include :

- **How?** (Programming.)
- **When?** (Scheduling.)
- **Whom?** (Personnel management.)
- **Cost?** (Budgeting.)

LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

1. **Why is it necessary to plan ahead?**
2. **Please describe the difference between OBJECTIVE, & SUBJECTIVE planning.**
3. **Please list five practical questions you should ask yourself in the planning process.**
4. **Briefly describe the importance of each.**
5. **Write out a strategy for Church Planting, based on those 5 questions.**
6. **Please describe in about 500 words, the long term vision for your life and ministry.**
7. **Please outline five goals by which you plan to get there.**

Chapter Nine

ANALYZING A GREAT SERMON

At the International Conference for Itinerant Evangelists convened in Amsterdam in 1983, Dr. Billy Graham preached a sermon entitled "The Evangelist and his Preaching.". He described many of the lessons he had learned from a life time of preaching the Gospel across the world, and spoke about the particular features he regarded as essential to a Gospel message which would effectively reach the hearts of modern mankind.

In my humble opinion Dr. Graham is the most effective communicator of the Gospel in the 20th Century, and therefore has much to contribute to our understanding of how to effectively preach Christ in our day. I was not privileged to be present at the conference or to actually hear his message. I have only read an edited version of it but was deeply impressed by his grasp of **the power of the Gospel and the plight of modern mankind.**

He said, "We are called to communicate the good news to people who are empty, heartsick, guilty, and afraid of death." This simple statement is really a profound definition of our task as Gospel Communicators.

He touches principles which are essential to an adequate and effective presentation of the Gospel which should be carefully considered by every preacher who longs to make Christ known through the agency of preaching. I also feel that it is imperative that all "Church Planters", should prayerfully study his remarks and bear them in mind when preparing messages and sermons for use in Crusades or meetings when seeking to pioneer new churches. We should also be mindful of these issues even in the planning of our strategy for planting a church in a new area. It will keep us mindful of the real objective of our project. Not simply to commence a new congregation of believers, but to endeavor to meet the deep needs of people who are without Christ and without God in their lives. So I am taking the liberty of sharing some of his material and then making some brief comments on it. I do not think for one moment that I can in any way improve on what this renowned preacher has said. My desire is simply to reiterate his convictions for the benefit of my readers, the Church Planters of the frontier nations. **Let's listen to the powerful words of Dr. Graham :-**

Preaching "Christ Crucified."

How do we communicate the Gospel with power and effect in this materialistic, scientific, rebellious, immoral, humanistic age?

The key to the basic question that unlocks the door to effective Gospel communication is found in 1 Cor. 2:2.

You remember that the Apostle Paul had gone to Corinth, an idolatrous, pagan, intellectual and immoral city. In fact it was one of the most immoral cities in the Roman world. When Paul walked into that city he was the only Christian in the whole city. What did he do to found one of the greatest churches of the first century? His method: ***"For I am determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."*** (1 Cor.2:2.)

That is how he summed up his total message to the Corinthians. If we could talk to Paul personally, he would say, "My intelligence alone is not able to handle it. I do not have the logic or the argument to persuade the Corinthians to accept the truth of the Gospel." Then he said, with positive faith, "I resolve to know nothing among you save Jesus and Him crucified." Paul knew that there was a built-in communicative power to the Cross and the Resurrection. Paul knew well that the Holy Spirit takes the simple message of the Cross- with its message of redemption, love and grace - and infuses it into lives with authority and power.

I remember one particular night in 1952. It was early in our ministry. I was preaching in a stadium, and we were having 35,000 to 40,000 people a night. On this particular night very few people responded to the appeal to receive Christ. I left the platform a little bit discouraged. I shouldn't have, because I had learned over the years not to count numbers - the results are in the hands of the Holy Spirit if I have faithfully proclaimed His message.

But there was a German business-man there, a man of God. He walked with me off the platform. Putting his arm around me, he said, "Billy, do you know what was wrong tonight? You didn't preach the cross." The next night I preached on the blood of Christ, and a great host of people responded to receive Christ as Saviour. I used Paul's method: "I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified"

The Spirit's work is vital.

For "man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14, NIV). Therefore when we proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ - Christ crucified and risen - there is built-in power. Proclaimers of the Gospel must always realize, as Paul stressed, that the natural man cannot accept the truth of Christ unless the veil is lifted by the Holy Spirit.

The glorious fact is this: The Holy Spirit takes the message, no matter how weak, no matter how primitive its delivery, and communicates it to the heart and mind with power. He breaks down the barriers. That's the supernatural power of the Spirit of God. No evangelist can have God's touch on his ministry until he realizes these realities and preaches in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the final analysis, it is the Holy Spirit who is the communicator.

No matter where I am, when I stand before an audience, I assume that certain things are true in their lives. Certain psychological factors exist in every audience. As I begin to proclaim the Gospel, I can trust the Holy Spirit to strike certain responsive chords in every heart that hears.

1. First, I know that life's needs are not totally met by social improvement or material affluence. This is true around the world. Jesus said a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

2. Second. I know there is an essential emptiness in every life without Christ. All humanity keeps crying for something, and they do not know what it is. How many people today are crying for something, and nothing seems to fulfill? Money doesn't fulfill. Sensual experiences do not fulfill. Give a person a million dollars, and it still won't satisfy. Give him every form of sensuality. It will not satisfy. What is he looking for? God. Only God satisfies.

Across the years I have spoken at a number of the world's most famous universities. I've heard the pitiful cry of young people who are intellectually, psychologically, spiritually, lost. They are searching for something and don't know what it is.

Pascal put it right when he said, "There is a God-shaped vacuum in every life that only God can fill." When we proclaim the Gospel, we are talking directly to that emptiness. That person you are witnessing to, whether in personal witnessing or before a group, has a built-in receptivity to the message of the Cross. Why? Because Christ alone fills the void in his heart. He may not be conscious of the void, but it is there.

3. The third thing I assume is that, among my hearers, there are lonely people. There is a cosmic loneliness. I once asked a friend of mine, a psychiatrist and theologian at a large university, "What is the greatest problem of the patients who come to you for help?" He thought a moment then said, "Loneliness. When you get right down to it, loneliness for God." We all sense something of that. For example, you can be in a crowd of people at a social gathering and, even with laughing people all around, feel a certain loneliness sweep over you. Its cosmic loneliness. A loneliness for God, because you are separated from your Creator. When you preach the Gospel, you can assume it is there in the audience.

4. Fourth, I know I am always speaking to people who have a sense of guilt. Guilt is perhaps the most universal of all human experiences. It is devastating. When we were in England in the middle '60's, the head of a psychiatric hospital told me, "I could release half of my patients if I could find a way to get rid of their sense of guilt."

What a tremendously relevant message we have. This is what the cross is all about. When we preach Christ, we are speaking directly to the nagging, depressing problem of guilt. That problem is always there. You don't have to make people feel guilty. Most of them already know it. Tell them what their real guilt is - their sin against God. Only Christ can bring the sense of forgiveness and relief.

5. Fifth, there is a universal fear of death. An American university survey found that young people think more about sex than any other subject. Secondly, surprisingly, they think about death. The second greatest killer of students in the United States is suicide. The specter is always there, and the subtle fear cannot be silenced.

But here is the glorious news : Our Lord came to nullify death. In His own death and resurrection, He made three things inoperative: sin, death and hell. What a message we have to give to those who are concerned about death.

Powerful Principles of Communication.

Now here are some principles of communicating the Gospel that I have learned from my experience. All these can be realized if we preach Christ, backed by a holy life and filled with the Holy Spirit.

1. First of all, we are to communicate the Gospel with authority.

Preach it with conviction and assurance, knowing that "faith cometh from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17).

When I quote the Scriptures, I know I'm quoting the Word of God. It is God's authoritative message to us. It is an infallible book. We must never depart from that.

I have one basic criticism of modern theological education, especially in Europe and America. We are not putting enough emphasis on authoritative teaching. Where are the great preachers today? Where are the Luthers, the Calvins, the Knoxes and the Spurgeons? Churches are constantly writing me and asking me for recommendations. They say, "We want somebody who can preach. We have a good administrator. But we want a preacher." They want a preacher who can preach like our Lord Jesus did. But it takes hard work to prepare effective messages. People ask me sometimes how long it took me to prepare a certain message. I answer, "A lifetime."

Saturate yourself in the Word of God and prayer. Then, as Spurgeon said, "Take your text and make a bee-line for the cross."

Professor Sid Bonnell told his class at Princeton Seminary one day, "You are never preaching until the audience hears another Voice." You see, we have two sets of ears. We must hear the voice of the Spirit of God.

- * Are people conscious of the OTHER voice when you preach?
- * Are you filled with the Holy spirit when you preach?
- * Are you anointed in your preaching?
- * Do you preach with His authority?

Authority is absolutely essential to the communication of the Gospel. One reason the people listened to Jesus was that He spoke as one having authority. When you quote God's Word, the Holy Spirit will use it. He will never allow it to return void.

2. Preach the Gospel WITH SIMPLICITY.

That is the only way I know how to do it. You must learn to take the profoundest things of God and proclaim them in simplicity. Jesus preached in parables, making it simple for the people. We must communicate so that people understand. Preach it with simplicity.

3. Preach WITH REPETITION.

Professor James Denney of Scotland once said that Jesus probably repeated Himself more than 500 times. The Gospel may at times seem "old" to us, but it is "new" to multitudes. Repeat it.

4. Preach the Gospel WITH URGENCY.

Preach it for a decision. People are dying. You may be speaking to some who will hear the Gospel for the last time. Preach with the urgency of Christ. Preach it to bring your hearers to Christ. Preach for decision. Preach for a verdict as Christ did. The call to repentance and faith is part of the proclamation too.

5. We are to communicate the Gospel by a HOLY LIFE.

Our world is looking for men and women of integrity. We desperately need communicators who back up their ministry with their lives. Our preaching emerges out of what we are. We must be holy people.

Those who have affected me the most profoundly in my life have not been the great orators and the great speakers. Rather, my life has been changed by those holy men and women that God has brought across my path.

Robert Murray McCheyne said, "A holy man is an awful weapon in the hands of God". Paul said, "I keep my body under subjection." We must take that seriously.

There are three avenues through which the devil attacks young preachers, it seems to me. (older ones as well). Money, Morals, Pride. We will battle them, I suppose, all our lives.

6. We communicate the Gospel BY OUR LOVE OF OUR FELLOWMAN.

Jesus said "All men will know you are my disciples if you love one another." (John 13:35). Do we really love lost souls as well as one another?

A layman in Boston went boldly into a hotel and walked up to a lady and said "do you know Christ?" She later told her husband about it. "Tell him to mind his own business," he snorted. She replied, "But my dear, if you could have seen the expression on his face and heard the earnestness with which he spoke, you would have thought it was his business." When you speak to people personally about Christ, do they think it 's your business because of the earnestness and love with which you approach them? Do you really love people? Does it show? Do they sense your compassion?

One of our associate evangelists was preaching at a university on one occasion. He tried to win the students to Christ, and they gave him a great deal of hostile reaction. After the lecture, one girl who was especially hostile came up to him and said, "I don't believe anything you said. I don't want to hear of Jesus ever again." He said, "I'm sorry you don't agree, but do you mind if I pray for you?" Stunned, she said "Nobody has ever prayed for me before." He bowed his head and began to pray. She stood, looking straight ahead. Then she noticed that while he was praying, tears were coming down his cheeks. When he opened his eyes, she too was crying. "No one in my whole life has loved me enough to shed a tear for me." They sat down on a bench, and that girl accepted Christ as her Saviour. How many of you love so much that you shed tears?

7. We communicate the Gospel by COMPASSIONATE SOCIAL CONCERN. Social involvement is commanded in Scripture. Look at our Lord. He touched the leper. Can you imagine how that leper felt when he was touched? The leper had to go around ringing a bell and saying "Unclean, unclean, unclean." And Jesus touched him. Jesus taught by example as well as precept that we have a responsibility to the oppressed, the sick and the poor.

While I think of the starving millions, I can hardly eat my food. Millions are going to starve in Ethiopia this year. They can't get any water in parts of Africa. We are to go into the world in the name of Jesus Christ - touching, alleviating need. Never forget the church goes into the world with an extra dimension of social concern. We go in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We

reach out to meet needs and give, but we must always say, "Given in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ." That is our motivation.

When Martin Luther King accepted his Nobel Peace Prize in Stockholm, he was asked, "Where did you get your motivation as a social reformer?" He said, "From my father's evangelical preaching."

8: Finally, we communicate the Gospel by OUR UNITY IN THE SPIRIT.

How vital it is to realize that if we can stay unified, yet also realize that there is a diversity in unity, we can turn the world upside down for Christ. For the first time in the history of the Christian Church, the possibility of fulfilling the Great Commission is in our grasp. But we must all work together in "the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). This is our task.

(End of Dr. Graham's abridged Sermon.)

From "The Evangelist and His Preaching", by Billy Graham.

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Let's take another look.

I sincerely trust that the preceding message is as meaningful and challenging to you as it has been to myself. It seems to summarize with profound simplicity, the whole task of preaching to win the lost. There are so many powerful truths encapsulated in this brief sermon. So many things we need to keep uppermost in our minds as we involve ourselves in the greatest task of winning people to Christ through the God ordained ministry of preaching.

I am happy that one of Dr. Graham's points commends the power of repetition because I intend to repeat and underline some of the important truths he shares. Let's go through his powerful message again.

1: Preaching Christ and Him Crucified.

The supreme importance of preaching Christ and the power of his atoning work accomplished on the Cross. Over many years there has been a diminished emphasis or preaching on this all important subject. Many modernist teachers have spoken disparagingly about the Cross, referring to it as primitive, antiquated, unsophisticated and obsolete. They have substituted a social Gospel of good works which appeals to them as being more respectable and socially acceptable. They have abandoned the emphasis of the Cross, the Blood of Christ shed for sinners, the atoning work of redemption through faith in the finished work of Calvary. These are too unfashionable. Too primitive for intellectual minds. To such modernists, pride and respectability are more important.

Even evangelical preachers do not preach the Cross of Christ as frequently or as authoritatively as once they did. It has become more fashionable to rationalize the Gospel. To seek to interpret it in psychological terms. Many have sought to present the Gospel as a biblical style of positive thinking.

They have endeavored to present Christ as some kind of guru, or philosopher, and make His teachings acceptable to an intellectually sophisticated generation.

**We must realize afresh that
the message of the Cross is timeless.**

The truth of salvation through faith in the atoning work of Christ is an eternal truth. Paul tells us that Christ is the "Lamb, slain before the foundation of the world." (Rev.13: 8.) Yet when we are given a prophetic glimpse into the eternal future, the living creatures around the throne of God are still praising the "Lamb, sacrificed for sinners." (Rev.5: 6-12.) The thin red line of redemption through shed blood, runs right through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. It is eternal. It is intrinsic. It is indispensable. Without it there is no salvation!

Paul refers to "the foolishness of preaching", and affirms that it is through this very activity that men come to the knowledge of God. For the message is only foolishness to them that perish, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. (1 Cor.1:18) Whatever our "intellectual" perspective may be, we must recognize and acknowledge that it is through the apparent "*foolishness of preaching*", that God has determined to save repentant sinners. If we allow our intellectual, humanistic pride to cause us to reject the foolishness of preaching the Cross and Christ Crucified, we may find ourselves pursuing the only alternative, i.e. "The preaching of foolishness." - modernism!

Now it is not necessary to actually preach the Cross every time we preach. It is not required that we tell the same story of the crucifixion in every message we present. But we must bring in the imperative truth that it is only through Christ's death and resurrection that men may be saved. Our preaching does not need to be "old fashioned", for the message of redemption is certainly not old fashioned. It is absolutely up to date. In fact it is also futuristic.

2: The Holy Spirit's work is vital.

If we do not emphasize the fact of salvation through Christ's Blood, we do not give the Holy Spirit opportunity to bring conviction of sin to the hearts of our audience. If this does not occur, neither will true conversion. The miracle of salvation cannot occur without the Holy Spirit, and He cannot cause conviction and repentance unless the message of salvation has been faithfully sown in the heart. So we must give Him material with which to work, i.e. the preaching of Christ Crucified.

The reason why the preaching of the Cross and salvation is "foolishness" to many is because it is a spiritual truth with a mystical dimension which cannot

be "understood" by the natural mind of man. (1 Cor. 14:2.) It is precisely because of this intrinsic mystical element that we must allow the Holy Spirit room to move. We should always preach with a clear awareness of our total dependency on the Spirit. Don't feel that everything depends on your sermon. Do not imagine that if you do not preach a "good sermon", nothing will happen.

It is NOT your sermon that converts people.
It is the power of the Holy Spirit.

So endeavor to be a channel for Him. Surrender your mind to Him every time you preach. Endeavor to "sense" what He wants you to say and allow His thoughts to flow through your words. Have faith that He will do His work.

I still remember the first time I heard Billy Graham preach in one of his great Crusades. The meetings had been running for several weeks and reports told of hundreds receiving Christ each night. I was a very young believer and extremely keen to see such a phenomena. Dr. Graham preached a very simple sermon. His manner was controlled and rather unemotional. The crowd listened attentively but I was not aware of any obvious crowd response. At the conclusion of his message, he gave a gracious, yet controlled appeal and then quietly stood back from the pulpit in what I later discovered was a characteristic stance. For what seemed liked an eternity nobody moved. In my heart I was willing him to step to the pulpit again and deliver a more impassioned appeal. I was beginning to think, "There will certainly not be hundreds flocking forward tonight." And then, quietly, a trickle of people began to come forward. They came, and kept on coming. From every part of the building they flowed towards the front until several hundred people stood across the front of the platform, joining in the sinner's prayer, and committing their lives to Christ.

What happened?

I quietly asked God, "What happened? What was that?" The response came clearly, "It was the Holy Spirit." Each subsequent time that I heard him preach, I recognized his quiet dependency on the Spirit. There are obviously many reasons why the "Billy Graham Ministry" has been so powerfully effective over the years. The Crusades are well organized. His publicity is good. He has excellent co-workers with him. His preaching is extremely acceptable. But above every other reason I believe the main one is that Billy Graham humbly depends on the Holy Spirit and leaves ample room and opportunity for Him to move and work, and the Holy Spirit makes the ministry effective and fruitful.

Now, let's briefly consider his observations of the human needs which are confronted.

1: Life's needs are not totally met by social improvement or material affluence.

In this materialistic age, we are apt to forget that man is basically and primarily a spiritual being and that his real needs and the solutions to them are in the spiritual realm. Sometimes we tend to think that successful and wealthy people have "got it made". That all their troubles are over and they have no worries or anxieties. In fact the opposite is frequently true. Their "successful career" has brought them a whole new set of stressful problems which eat into their peace of mind and contentment of spirit. Many people are aptly portrayed by the "rich young ruler" who appeared to have everything a person could desire yet longed for a richer and higher quality of life which only God could impart.

2: There is an emptiness in every life without Christ.

"The God shaped vacuum in every life which only God can fill." The people we meet each day whose lives appear to be "full", are the ones with the greatest spiritual need. They have endeavored to fill a deeply perceived void in their lives with all that the sensual world has to offer. But it is like a jig saw puzzle with one piece missing. There is only ONE piece which will fit in there properly. We may try to make other pieces fit but they don't, no matter how hard we try. And so it is with the God shaped vacuum, Only one thing truly fits, -God Himself. People may try to fill their lives with business, pleasure, social activities, drugs, alcohol and sex. Nothing really fits. Nothing truly satisfies. Deep within the void remains unfilled and the deepest needs of the human being can only be met by the indwelling presence of God by His Spirit.

3: The pain of loneliness.

One of the most popular secular songs of recent years was the Beatle hit, "All the lonely people, where do they all come from?" This song topped the Hit -Parade for months. I believe it was because it spoke to a powerful felt-need in the lives of millions. On a planet full of people there are millions of lonely souls. Lonely from a multitude of different reasons, but all with the basic denominator of a lonely heart. The main reason for human loneliness is our estrangement from God. Man was created in God's image and fashioned to be a companion for God. Without that relationship there is a missing dimension. Man is basically, "lonely for God". Of course most lonely people do not recognize or acknowledge this, and part of our task as preachers is to help them to accept this fact and open up to the relationship which God offers through Christ. Once a person truly receives Christ into their life, it is possible for them never to be lonely again.

4: The Burden of Guilt.

One of the hurtful legacies we receive from our original parents, Adam and Eve, is the burden of guilt. It is passed from generation to generation. It is often a nebulous factor, difficult to recognize for what it really is because of the great gap which exists between man and his creator.

An eminent Psychiatrist in Sydney, Australia, once shared with me about a treatment with which they were experimenting. It was based on the observation that a huge percentage of patients with mental problems, harbored a deep need to forgive, and to be forgiven. The doctor described how he first sought to have the patients forgive people whom they perceived to be the cause of their mental anguish. This frequently necessitated bringing together certain parties who may have contributed to the patients problems and encouraging forgiveness, new empathy, and reconciliation. After this came the need to have the patient forgive themselves. This was usually an even more difficult exercise, but, as the Doctor and his staff persisted, they achieved a considerable amount of success. Although these two factors achieved an encouraging improvement in the condition of the patients, my friend was still baffled by another area in which the patient obviously needed release. It was, to him, a mysterious area in which he had no knowledge or experience. I spoke with him about Adam and Eve, their rebellion and its consequences. About the fact that man has an innate need to receive the forgiveness of God. I mentioned that few today were consciously aware of, or interested in the Law of God, but that sub-consciously every human soul was innately aware of it and the fact that we stand guilty before God and His Law.

The Psychiatrist himself became aware of his own guilt in this area and prayed a prayer for forgiveness and salvation. He also discovered that many of his patients improved enormously and many were set free, after receiving the forgiveness of God through faith in Christ.

Obviously this guilt does not always produce recognizable mental problems. Most of the people who are burdened with this onerous guilt problem are functioning normally in many areas of their life. But deep down, there is an incessant sense that all is not well. They are "out of tune" with the harmony of life. Often a little probing will bring this fact to the surface and then it can be dealt with. This is one of the tasks of the Holy Spirit. We need to give Him some material with which to work. Endeavoring in our preaching to touch upon these areas of common need and allow the Spirit to gently bring the guilty soul to repentance.

5: The Universal fear of death.

The two common denominators of human life are birth and death. As sure as man is born, he will inevitably die. This is a specter which fills the sub-conscious mind continually. For many, death is the great unknown. The very fact that natural man knows so little about death and what lies beyond the

grave, causes foreboding and fear. The message of Christianity is the message of One who experienced death, conquered its mystique, rose from the dead and ascended to God. He is the trail maker. He has made a way for us to follow Him, through the Valley of the shadow of death, into the glories of the Everlasting Kingdom.

The reason why so many millions of people in our world are slaves of the great religious systems is the fear of death. Millions cling to the belief of re-incarnation as a means of escaping the grip of death. Millions more live their whole life in servitude to the gods in the hope of gaining divine favor beyond the grave. These are facts of which we need to be conscious as we preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Finally, let's consider those aspects of preaching that Dr. Graham deems most important.

1: Communicate the Gospel with Authority.

One way to preach with authority is to preach the Bible, then you may speak with God's authority. This is something that Billy Graham obviously learned early in his ministry. He is famous for declaring, "The Bible says..." Because he quotes the Bible so frequently, the authority of the Bible is with him. This provides material with which the Holy Spirit can work, bringing conviction, revelation, understanding and salvation. As preachers we obviously need to spend quality time in the Word. Reading it, devouring it, studying it, quoting it. Discovering what it has to declare on all the important

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*****areth. He confidently declared, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for He has anointed me to preach the Good News."* Friends, we must value and treasure the anointing of the Spirit. We must realize that without it we speak as mortal men. But when the special touch of God is upon us, we can speak as the oracles of God. (1 Peter. 4:11.) The anointing is not necessarily manifest in emotional fervor. It is not simply speaking loudly or forcefully. It is a mystical presence of the Spirit in what we say which lends credibility, authority and persuasion to our words.

We can hardly expect to communicate with authority unless we are well prepared and thoroughly versed on the subject about which we are speaking. The anointing of the Spirit is essential but it does not excuse us from the need to prayerfully and carefully prepare our heart and mind.

**We need to study the scriptures,
waiting on God for illumination and revelation.**

Asking God prayerfully how He would have us present this message. Seeking to understand the subject from His perspective. To feel about it as He feels and to communicate it with His love and compassion. We can also speak with authority as we realize that we are God's spokes-person to the crowd to whom we are preaching. There may be people in the crowd who may never hear the Gospel again. This is their opportunity. There is no higher calling or greater responsibility than that of a preacher. We stand between God and man. We need, by God's grace and ability, to be God's messenger to the very best of our ability.

As we endeavor to be channels through which God can deliver His Word, our message will come through with authority and strength.

2: Preach with Simplicity.

The great difference between Jesus and many modern preachers is that Jesus took the most profound subjects and simplified them, whilst modern preachers take the simplest of subjects and complicate them. There is often a problem of ego involved in which the preacher wants to project an image of profound knowledge and enhance his reputation as a masterful preacher.

**Jesus was not concerned about His reputation
as a Preacher. He was only concerned with having His audience
understand the great truths He conveyed.**

Perhaps we need to understand afresh the enormous difference between being "childish", and "childlike" Many preachers are afraid to be childlike in case they are perceived as being immature, lacking in knowledge and sophistication. Jesus Himself was childlike and said that unless we also became such we could not "enter the kingdom". We need to simplify our presentation of the Gospel, not by being childish and silly, but by approaching the great truth of the Gospel with a simplicity with which Jesus Himself dignified it.

3: Don't be afraid to use repetition.

There are many ways to say basically the same thing. The need to repeat important issues does not mean that we must become boring, always delivering the same message and the same stories. Jesus continually presented the same basic truths but He clothed them in different apparel. His use of parables and illustrations was brilliant. He told stories which were so simple that even the children understood them and yet his whole audience remained enthralled. They listened for hours, forgetting about food and rest, completely absorbed in His teachings.

**Most people need to hear things several times
before the truth gets through.**

Part of the skill of an effective teacher is the ability to repeat things, using different approaches but emphasizing the basic indispensable truths.

4: Preach with Urgency.

There must always be a sense of urgency about our preaching. Not an atmosphere of panic or confusion, but a real sense that our message is imperative and urgent, an awareness that important decisions must be made in the light of our message. This is true for three good reasons:-

A: The people to whom we preach may never hear the message again.

Circumstances of their life may dictate that this is the last opportunity they may have to hear the message of salvation through faith in Christ. So make your presentation simple, specific, urgent, and requiring an immediate decision. Always give an opportunity for people to respond at the conclusion of your message. This may be their last chance.

B: Life is so fragile. Death is so inevitable. We should never presume that there will be another opportunity. I well remember an occasion that happened many years ago, when I was a very young preacher. It was a Sunday evening Gospel service and though there were approximately 1,000 people present, my attention was almost totally absorbed by two young men seated at the rear of the auditorium. When the appeal was given several people responded, but there was no response from them. I felt so

concerned about them that I went quickly to the rear of the church and confronted them before they could leave. I told them of the strong concern I had felt for them and urged them to receive Christ. One of them was inclined to do so, but his companion discouraged him. "We are too young to think of religion" he said, "We have our lives before us. Perhaps when we are much older we can consider what you say." With these remarks they left the building to make their way home. Alighting quickly from one bus, intent on crossing the city square in order to catch another one, suddenly a huge truck hit them both. One died immediately, the other en-route to hospital. Two young men who had felt that death was many years away, suddenly plunged into eternity.

C: There is also an urgency to our message right now because the return of Christ is at hand. Prophetic signs all around the world are indicating that we are heading for a cataclysmic event.

**I believe that it is appropriate and necessary
for us to preach the Coming of the Lord
and to do it with a measure of urgency.**

People need to know that the Kingdom of God is at hand. They need to be made aware that this present age will climax soon with the return of the Messiah and His enthronement over the nations. The beloved Apostle John says, "*The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and His Messiah, and He shall reign forever and forever.*" (Rev. 11;15.)

5: Communicating through Holiness of Life.

In these days, more than ever before, there is a tremendous need for preachers to communicate the Gospel through their sanctified life style as well as their pulpit sermons. This has always been required, but I feel that today the ministry is under an unusual onslaught from Satan. He knows that the end is near. He also knows that there will be a tremendous spiritual harvest in these crucial days before the return of the Lord. He is determined to hinder the reaping of that harvest to the best of his ability.

**One of his prime weapons is to destroy
the credibility of the messengers.**

Sadly he has succeeded in doing this to a degree. Some of the most prominent, high profile preachers have been exposed before the eyes of the world. This has done enormous damage, especially in Asia, but also in many other parts of the world. Satan is still working in this fashion and his attempts are being further intensified. It behooves every one of us to recognize his

strategy and be on our guard. *"Let him that thinks he stand, take heed lest he fall!"*

6: Communicating through genuine love for our fellow man.

It is so easy to become professional in our ministry. To go through the motions without the right motive. We must realize that the motives are more important than the motions. Sometimes it is needful to re-examine our priorities. To go back to square one. To prayerfully consider what is the real motivation of our ministry. Many preachers commence their ministerial life with excellent purpose and pure motives but somehow they became entangled later in the professionalism of their calling. We need to go back to the Cross. Back to the place where we started. To examine afresh our lives in the light of Calvary's Love.

**We need to see people in the light of the Cross,
through the eyes of the Saviour.**

We need to stay there until we feel His love for them in our own hearts.

I often tell young preachers, "The ministry is about two things. *It is about God, and it is about people.*" Our task revolves around serving God and serving people. We are His priesthood, standing between God and the people. We cannot do either of these things well without love.

**Loveless service, to God, or our fellow man,
is totally unacceptable.**

7: Communicating through Compassionate Social Concern.

There are millions of people in our modern world who are in desperate need of compassionate concern. They represent a tremendous challenge to the Church of Jesus Christ. I believe too that they present a glorious opportunity to reap a great harvest amongst them. Jesus was definitely concerned with the social needs of the people. When He fed the multitudes, and healed the sick, He demonstrated that compassion. We must follow His example and reach out in practical ways to meet the needs and heal the hurts of our fellow man. The world is in turmoil and confusion, and only Christ has the answer. He is looking to us to meet the challenge and show that He is truly the "Light of the World."

8: Communicating the Gospel by Our Unity in the Spirit.

In these critical days of harvest opportunity we Christians must work together as never before. The task before us is too big for any denomination or organisation. It demands a "net-working" together such as has never previously

been witnessed. We must combine our efforts, our resources and personnel, to make a mighty, united effort to bring Christ to the world.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES.

- 1. What five heart attitudes does Dr. Graham anticipate in every audience?**
- 2. What are the eight principles of effective Gospel communication which Dr. Graham advocates?**
- 3. Which of these principles need to be strengthened in your preaching?**
- 4. Why do we need a sense of urgency in our preaching?**

Chapter Ten

SOME CHURCH PLANTING METHODS

There are numerous effective ways by which to plant a new congregation. We are going to briefly consider a few of them. However, you may be led to use some other way. Perhaps a maxim might be, **"If it works for you, do it."**

Some of the factors which may help to determine which method may be the most appropriate and effective are :-

- **The Location in which you plan to commence the Church.**

You need to consider the political situation. Some methods of Church Planting are inappropriate because of government regulations and restrictions. For example, in many situations it is not permissible to hold any kind of public rallies, but it is possible to witness to people, one on one, and deliberately keeping a low profile.

This is also true in some cases because of the religious influence. In some multi-racial and multi-religious societies, the government will not permit large public rallies which may antagonize other religious groups.

- **Your Style of Ministry.**

Another factor which may determine the approach you choose will be your particular gifting and style of ministry. Not every Church Planter has the kind of ministry that is suitable for conducting large evangelistic meetings. Some of the most effective Church Planters I know have a much lower profile ministry than do the evangelists who are able to conduct mass Crusades.

- **The resources you have available.**

You will also need to carefully consider the resources which are available to you. Some methods of Church Planting necessitate a strong team, whilst other methods can be operated effectively by an individual, or by a very small team. You need to consider the amount of financial help that is available too. Big Crusades usually require large budgets. You need to carefully investigate the likely expenses and determine from your available resources, whether you have the faith or finances to cope with that kind of outlay, and whether the results will justify that expense.

Where will you Plant that Church?

The decision as to where you determine to plant a new church will usually have some divine, spiritual input. It is essentially something more than cold logic or natural reasoning which inspires a person to attempt the task of pioneering a new church.

**You usually begin to develop a
"more than natural" interest
in a particular place.**

I have personally found, and I know this to be true in the experience of many of my colleagues, that you usually begin to develop a "more than natural" interest in a particular place. Perhaps you "happen" to visit a certain city and whilst you are there you find yourself becoming burdened and concerned for the spiritual needs of that people. You often find a prayer burden developing for that place and notice that whenever you pray the needs of that place come into your prayers and intercession.

You can often discern the will of God by the length of time that such an interest lasts. If after some months you seem to lose the burden for that place, then probably you have fulfilled what God wanted you to do. If, after a considerable time, the interest continues and becomes even greater, you may begin to realize that God is leading you to do something substantial about that place.

You then need to begin to "wait on God" about that place. Begin to ask Him pertinent questions about it. Try to develop a "listening ear", and an ability to discern what God's Spirit is trying to show to you about that place. God will begin to share all kinds of impressions with you and as you ponder on them His plan for you and that place will begin to take shape in your spirit. You will usually see the kind of approach that He wants you to take. He will frequently give you some indication of what will transpire when you get there and how things will go as you endeavor to plant a new congregation there.

1: The Evangelistic Crusade method.

This method employs a very direct approach which when successful can be extremely fruitful, attracting large numbers of people, in a relatively short time. However, there are several important factors which will determine the ultimate effectiveness or otherwise.

Where?

The venue in which you conduct the meetings is the first factor.

Is it a good venue, one to which people are willing to come?

Is it accessible to a good portion of the people you wish to reach?

Is there any public transport available?

Can people make their own way there in the event that little or no transport is available.

If the Crusade is eminently successful is the venue available on a continuing basis?

If not, is there suitable alternative accommodation somewhere?

Who?

Who will actually preach at the Crusade?

If you plan to do it, are you sure that you have this kind of public ministry?

If you have another preacher, an evangelist, to conduct the actual Crusade, you must be seen to be a visible and integral member of the "team". When the actual Crusade period is coming to a close you should begin to take over the leadership so that when the special meetings are concluding you are seen to be the leader. This gives you a profile before the people and helps them to recognize you as their spiritual leader.

Do you have an adequate music ministry team? musicians, singers etc.

Do you have some special features, testimonies, films, soloists etc.

Does your team have the kind of impact required for this type of event?

What will the emphasis be?

A public Crusade needs an emphasis to draw the people.

Will it be the well known preacher?

Will the theme be salvation, new life, healing, Bible prophecy?

What will the people be coming for?

In the modern context of Church Planting, the apostolic emphasis on signs and wonders and the ministry of healing has been seen to be a very powerful and effective means of drawing people to hear the Gospel. Effectual prayer for the sick will always attract people, particularly where the meetings are conducted in a low socio-economic area, because :-

Unfortunately, there are always many sick persons in such a place.

Many of them have no access to, or cannot afford the medical care they need. Such people often have basic faith for healing. When they hear the message of healing, they are quick to seize hold of it and to believe for their healing. Once the word gets around that God is healing the sick, people usually begin to flock to the meetings.

Advertising and Publicity.

One essential factor in a successful Crusade activity is to let the local population know that the Crusade is on. It is pointless hiring a large public facility if no one knows about the meetings. This can some times be an expensive item on the budget, depending upon the kind of advertising you plan to do. If modern means of advertising are available and your budget will allow you to use them, then these are obviously an effective means of announcing the meetings.

Obtain Interviews on T.V. Radio, or in the Press.

If you have some newsworthy feature in the Crusade you can often obtain an
media interview. Or if you are buying space for
ad*****

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***** etc. If these things ARE happening, -
great. But if you advertise them and they do not occur, the people are
disillusioned and disappointed and become skeptical. It is far better to use
such advertising sparingly until God begins to perform these kind of things.
Once they begin to occur they provide their own advertising. People begin to
share their testimonies and recount what has happened to them. This word of
mouth testimony is often the most effective means of advertising.

Media advertising is not always available.

I realize that for many of you modern media advertising is not available. You may have to rely on lower profile means. If you are campaigning in a smaller town, a large banner across the main street can usually be easily arranged. Ask yourself, "how do people advertise their goods and wares in this place?" Then use those methods too. Advertising in the local supermarket. Placing advertising posters in shop windows. Distributing attractive leaflets in the market place. If you can get permission to use a mobile sound system, drive throughout the city and neighboring areas announcing the meetings over the sound system. Above all, use your imagination. Discover some novel ways to advertise your intentions. The main thing is to let people know that you are here and what you are doing and do it in a manner which will attract their interest and gain their favorable response. Somehow, some way, you have to attract the people's attention and interest.

The "Follow up" procedures are essential.

Before you even commence your Crusade, you need to adequately prepare for the following up of all those who make commitments to Christ. Failing to do this is like going fishing without some means to keep the fish once you have caught them.

You need good Counselors.

You must establish some relationship with new converts as soon as possible. i.e. before they leave the meeting in which they have made a commitment. Have them come forward to the platform and be met by yourself and your counselors.

Establish a personal point of contact with them.

Pray with them. Give them some helpful literature.

Obtain their name and address.

Arrange to have someone visit them as soon as possible.

Make some practical arrangements to keep in close contact with them.

Encourage them to attend as many services as possible.

Making the transition from "Crusade to Church."

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We now reach a very critical point in which we help the new converts to make a transition between attending exciting Crusade services, into being part of a local body of believers.

It is usually advisable to keep the Crusade going as long as it continues to have momentum. If the numbers of people attending remain consistently good and there is obviously a vital interest in the meetings, then by all means continue to hold them. The excitement and stimulation of the Crusade provides an excellent environment in which to introduce some basic teaching for the new believers. Begin to make a gradual transition. Don't close down the Crusade atmosphere, let it continue and begin to gradually phase in teaching and practices which will help you form the crowd into a body.

It is wonderful when the evangelistic momentum of the Crusade can be continued into the local church mode. There is a pronounced excitement and enthusiasm associated with a soul winning event which needs to be continued as long as possible. New converts make the finest soul winners. Try never to lose the excitement and momentum of evangelistic fervor. Even after the local church comes into being, endeavor to make it a soul winning church.

2: The House Meeting Method.

This is a less dramatic and spectacular method of church planting than the Crusade approach, but it has much to recommend it and is much more frequently used.

It is a method which is open to many more ministries than is the Crusade style. I have known many effective Church Planters who have successfully employed this style of planting. They have not necessarily been high profile ministers. In fact the majority of them are average preachers to whom God has given a burden to extend His Kingdom through planting new congregations.

I fondly remember a good friend in Australia who planted many new churches throughout his ministerial life. He was not a powerful public speaker, nor did he possess a charismatic personality. He had been a farmer for many years before entering the ministry and I guess he knew some good agricultural principles which helped him understand the process of church planting.

He usually adopted a "tent Makers role". God would lay a particular town on his heart and before long he and his family would move there. He would obtain some kind of employment to support them, then rent or purchase a house and begin to hold house meetings. He always started off quietly and plodded away until he had some converts and was able to form a local Body of believers. He never had spectacular results, but over a number of years he successfully planted many churches. His name never became well known. He was not a preacher of renown. He was never featured as a speaker at big

conventions. But I am convinced that when he stands before His Lord in the light of eternity, he is going to receive a great reward for his faithfulness and obedience.

Church Planting, Indonesian style.

Church planting is very much a feature of Christian activity in Indonesia and the national church has grown impressively over recent years. For several good reasons the main method of Church Planting is that of commencing house meetings. There are many dramatic growth statistics to confirm the effectiveness of this method. All over the nation, thousands of new churches have been brought into being in this manner. However I will cite one example of a Church Planting ministry in the island of Java, and look at some of the principles they observe.

Here are some basic principles of this method.

- Form a team.

Prayerfully assemble a team of people who are dedicated to planting new congregations. The team may be comprised of several families, and some single persons.

Begin to fellowship and pray together with special emphasis on building good relationship and mutual trust.

- Target a town, or village.

Let the Holy Spirit lay some particular place on your hearts and then begin to concentrate your prayers on that population group. Learn to take spiritual authority and begin to exercise this in regard to your target area.

- Begin to contact people there.

Move into the town and begin to make contact with local people. Introduce yourself in a friendly manner to some of the influential people in town. e.g The Mayor, and Councilors, School Principals and Teachers, Business people, Store owners, Tradesmen.

- Begin to Witness.

Keep a humble attitude and a low, inoffensive posture. This is particularly necessary where you may have a potentially hostile religious environment. Make use of good, attractive literature.

- Make a Convert.

Your first converts are extremely important. You are laying the foundation for the future church and you need good, solid material. So prayerfully trust God to give you good people who will form a strong nucleus and lay an enduring foundation for the new church.

- **Commence meetings in the persons house.**

Once you begin to hold meetings in the home of a local person, you begin to penetrate that neighborhood. You indicate to the local people that this new church is not just the work of "outsiders", but is supported by local people whom they know. It is essential to indicate the local identity of this new group.

- **Emphasize the Ministry of healing.**

The ministry of healing is the most effective key with which to open up a community. There are sick and hurting people in every community. Once some of them have been genuinely helped and healed, the word will begin to spread and others will quickly come. Sickness is a known need which impacts almost every family and healing is something in which everyone is interested.

You may not be known as a minister who has a healing ministry but this does not prevent you from praying for the sick. Jesus said that one of the marks of believers would be *"they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover."* Be sensitive and responsive to God's leadings. Pray for the sick whenever you sense that God is encouraging you to do so. You will be amazed to see how wonderfully God may use these expressions of faith.

3: Planting a Daughter Church.

Every local church should be desirous of reaching into the surrounding area and planting more churches. This is the most effectual means of reaching a wider community. The most effective way to accomplish this is by starting house meetings. The mandate of every local church is to *"prepare the saints to do the work of the ministry."* (Eph. 4: 12.) Every pastor should :-

- **Concentrate on training local leadership.**

Every church should have a leadership training program functioning. Ideally this must include training in local Church Planting. Other leadership functions should also be taught, and the participants should be used as much as possible to undertake ministry tasks in the local church. This increases the ministry potential in the church and prepares future leaders. Ideally, the Senior Pastor should "pastor", or "shepherd", his leaders, and they in turn should shepherd the sheep. This provides, "in -service training" for the potential leaders and prepares them for the time when they will become pastors.

- **Start house meetings in every geographical area around the church.**

Every church needs a network of house churches. No church can adequately cater for the needs of its members in the larger celebration type meetings. People also need the closer intimacy of small group inter-action too. It is at this level of leadership that your assistant pastors can begin to function.

Here they can gain valuable experience in the tasks associated with providing spiritual care and oversight for Christians.

- **Use the House Church to break into that area.**

In addition to the mutual edification which can occur in these smaller groups the informal non-religious setting can also provide an effective environment into which non Christian neighbors and friends can be introduced. Never allow the house group to become insular or isolated from its community environment. Encourage them to keep finding ways in which to relate to the community. Encourage evangelistic enterprises.

- **Aim to ultimately form a new church there.**

If a particular group shows very healthy signs of growth encourage them to focus on the possibility of becoming a new church in that locality. Concentrate some attention on the leadership and begin to groom them for the task of exercising a pastoral role in that situation.

The Technique of Transplanting.

Every gardener is familiar with the technique of transplanting, in which seeds are initially planted in a seed box and then later transferred into the garden. Whilst the plants are small they can grow up together under the close watch and supervision of the gardener. But as they become larger and stronger, they are then suitable to be transplanted.

The local church should be seen as a seed box in which members can be closely supervised, watered and fed until they reach a certain stage of development when it becomes feasible to transplant them.

Such families can be transferred from the seed box into another geographical area where there is potential to begin a new church. Ideally this should not be done with just one or even two families. It is much better if several families who can form a fairly strong nucleus, can be transferred together. This must be done officially with the full blessing of the pastor and congregation, who should also appoint the leaders of the new congregation. This branch, or daughter church should remain under the covering of the parent church until it becomes mature enough to stand alone.

If more churches undertook to exercise this kind of expansion ministry there would be less "splits and divisions" in which some congregations are torn apart. New churches would then be born to happy parents and there would be less rivalry and friction. These things are extremely detrimental to the image and reputation of churches.

4: The "PACT" method.

This method, the "**Plant A Church Together**" style, is being successfully employed in numerous parts of Asia. I believe that one of the reasons why it is being blessed is that it involves, net-working, sharing responsibility and resources, uniting together and working together. These are all biblical principles which God loves to see and bless.

The "PACT" program relies upon certain parties coming into agreement and working arrangements whereby they can work together to plant a new congregation. This can be achieved in any of several ways.

- **The Branch, or Daughter Church Program.**

In which a local church assists a Church Planter to commence a new congregation under their covering and oversight. This is most effective when the parent church also transfers a number of families who live in the area targeted. They then form the nucleus of the new congregation.

- **Two or more neighboring churches combining.**

When one church is perhaps not large enough to sponsor a new one, two or more churches within a given region may determine to combine in order to do so. Each may contribute several families who happen to live in the geographic region in which the new church will be planted. This is usually more easily achieved when the sponsoring churches belong to the same group or denomination.

- **The District or Regional Presbytery project.**

This involves numerous churches within a defined local proximity combining their resources and personnel in order to plant more congregations. A projected example of this could be a sizable town or city where there are already several churches of the same group. For example if there were fifteen churches, they might plan to increase to twenty within the next five years.

Some of the intrinsic factors in such a program would be :-

- **The Pioneer Workers.**

- **Morale.**

The pioneer workers must have strong morale. They need to be courageous, and have a very positive outlook.

- **Motivation.**

They must be strongly motivated with a passion which will persevere patiently in the face of discouragement, persecution, and antagonism. They must be "self starters", with discipline and determination. Church Planters always need to be highly motivated persons.

- **Message.**

The pioneer must have a positive message to share and be able to communicate it in a manner which will attract and captivate people. A powerful public preaching ministry is essential.

- **Ministry.**

Preaching is not the only aspect of ministry needed to pioneer a new congregation. The worker also needs ministry skills such as :-

- Effective prayer ministry.
- A healing and deliverance ministry.
- Counseling ability.

- **The support of the Workers.**

Significant financial demands are integral to Church Planting and the sponsors, together with the workers should determine beforehand how the required budget may be met. Some items in the budget might be :-

Rental for accommodation of workers and families.

Rental of suitable meeting place.

Operating expenses.

Financial support of the worker.

- **The supervision of the Workers.**

Most pioneer workers are novices and need good supervision, guidance and encouragement. This is one of the reasons the daughter church style is good. The senior pastor of the sponsoring church can give pastoral oversight to the pioneer worker.

5: The "Centers of Service" Concept.

I personally believe that in the great harvest of the next few years the churches which will be planted will be different from contemporary traditional churches in several ways. I shall share some of the features that I feel will be different.

- **Less "Religious."**

The new style of church will not be concerned with religious facades and appearances. It will abandon much of the religious ritual presently associated with churches. Its style will be more simplistic, realistic, practical, and meaningful.

- **Less Denominational emphasis.**
There will be a tremendous increase in "Independent Churches" which will relate to each other in fellowship rather than by institutional affiliations. Local churches will also relate to each other by geographical proximity rather than because of denominational or doctrinal affinities.
- **Less emphasis on Church Buildings.**
Congregations will be less concerned with church buildings and will tend to meet in non-religious type facilities, utilizing ware-houses, social clubs, public buildings etc.
- **A Polarization between the True Church and the false.**

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***** of an army of laborers which the Holy Spirit will recruit from the ranks of Christian lay persons, e.g business men and women, school teachers, house wives etc.

- **More Charismatically Oriented.**
The giftings of the reapers will not be those gained in seminaries or colleges but those endowed by the Holy Spirit. Ministers of the true church will be far more dependent on the power of the Spirit than on any human accomplishments or skills.
- **More Cultural Authenticity.**
The indications of Western Colonialism, which are all too evident in the church today, will recede dramatically and be replaced by authentic cultural indicators. For example, the church in China has already become very distinctly, the Chinese Church. It has a distinctly different style and appearance to that church which was originally planted by Western Missionaries.

**The Church in China today,
HAS A CHINESE FACE,**

and that is one of several reasons why it is flourishing and growing at such a pace. It could never have attained this growth rate had it remained a church with a Western face.

- **More Community Service related.**
The churches which the Holy Spirit will plant all over the world will have the Biblical New Testament church as their model. One of the outstanding features of that church was its impact upon the social structure of its day.

The believers of the future church will be a Kingdom of priests who will cause a massive Kingdom impact on their respective societies. They will not live their Christian lives in separateness and isolation from the main stream of their community, locked in the ivory towers of their ornate church buildings. They will be out amongst their peers, impacting their communities and bringing the life of the Kingdom to bear upon their humanistic societies.

Whilst teaching in the Philippines recently I believe that God gave me a prophetic glimpse of a new kind of Christian ministry that He wants to

foster. I have been challenging Church Planters with that vision ever since and am taking this opportunity to share the concept with **YOU**.

The vision relates to the founding of what I am calling, "**CENTERS OF SERVICE.**" i.e. Centers which are founded in order to realistically serve the needs of the community, Instead of pioneering of a 'Church', in the traditional sense, with the usual "church activities", **the vision is to establish a centre which can offer various legitimate services to the community.** The pioneer goes into the new area with a clear purpose, to serve that community in the Name of Jesus.

The concept is based on the realization that Jesus, our ultimate role model, came into this world as a servant. (Phil.2:1-5.) He said, *"I am not come to be served, but to serve."* As His disciples we also are to be servants in His Name. This should be uppermost in our minds as we plan to move into a new community.

Serving the Community.

The pioneer minister might initially conduct a door to door survey of every home in the target area. He would present himself at the door and announce, "My name is..... and I am calling on every house in the area in an endeavor to identify the social and spiritual needs of this community. I wonder if you would kindly assist me by answering a few simple questions?

Firstly, could I have your family name please?
Do you have any children? How many?
Are they boys or girls, and what ages are they?
How many of them are presently at school?
Are you experiencing any problems with which we can help you?
What kind of program or facilities might help your children?
Would a 'child minding program' help you manage your family affairs better?
Would an English language class help them?
Would a literacy class help them?
Would any of them like to attend some guitar lessons?
Would your children benefit if a youth club were opened?

There are many activities of this nature which someone in your team could conduct which would be helpful and beneficial to local youngsters. Once you have them attending your centre, the barriers are broken.

You could commence a :-

- Marriage Guidance Centre.

- Family Planning Centre.
- English Language Centre.
- Social Centre for lonely people.
- Child Minding Centre or kindergarten.

By engaging in a program such as the one I am suggesting, several things would be accomplished.

- **You could introduce yourself to every family in town.**
- **You could make numerous friendly contacts.**
- **The people see that you are here to try to help them.**
- **You appear as someone genuinely interested in their welfare.**
- **Your friendly, helpful image is established.**
- **They realize that you are not a religious freak.**
- **You meet them at the level of their interests and needs.**

By being able to direct people to the Centre, towards a variety of activities in which they or their family may be interested, people get to know where you are located.

It makes the centre of your activities much more approachable. People realize that you are not here simply to peddle religion, or "Pie in the sky when you die". You are a real person, interested in the real needs of their lives.

What kind of a church would you like to attend?

You should also include some "church related" questions in your survey. You could ask

- What is the reason why you do not attend a church?
- What kind of a church would you like to attend?
- What can we, as a local church do for you?

There are as many Keys as there are doors.

There are many ways and methods which one might use in order to plant a new church. We need to use our sanctified imagination and let the Holy Spirit share His tactics with us. **Jesus has the "Key of David, He opens doors which no man can close, and closes doors which no man can open." (Rev. 3: 7, 8.)**

Always remember that, "No door is locked if you have the right key."

If God wants you in a certain place, then NO man can keep you out.

WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN?

"Don't you see that children are God's finest gift?" (Psa 127:3)

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The greatest mission field in the world is one that is seldom mentioned in Mission strategy. I refer to the world of children and youth. Statisticians tell us that by 2010AD, half of the world's population will be under 21. These children and young people will constitute the largest, most needy, most challenging and most rewarding people group in the entire history of our world. Why is it that so little attention and concern is directed towards them? Precisely because they are so special to God and are therefore a prime target for Satan who wishes to destroy them and rob God of the tremendous harvest He wants to reap amongst them.

The children of this present generation are decidedly disadvantaged in that we, their predecessors, have brought them into a crazy, irresponsible, dangerous world. They have inherited a world gone mad, created by their elders who for the most part are the greatest critics of the younger generation. Children of this late twentieth century are the largest, most neglected, abused and exploited people group on earth. This sad phenomena will only increase horrifically unless the world wide church of Jesus Christ takes up the challenge to rescue them. This will necessitate a tremendous change of perspective because, so far, the church has largely ignored and neglected them. It is ironic and extremely sad that the largest, most accessible people group on earth is also the most neglected.

Bring the children to Jesus

An incident in the New Testament clearly reveals the attitude of Jesus towards children.

“Mothers kept bringing their children to Jesus that He might touch and bless them; and the disciples rebuked them for doing so. But when Jesus saw this He was indignant and pained and said to the disciples, allow the children to come to Me and do not forbid nor hinder them for to such belongs the Kingdom of God.”

(Mk 10:13,14)

This scripture, and others, clearly show that Jesus wants us to bring children to Him. He wants to touch their lives, and bless them. As we reach out to a lost and dying world, the children of our world must be high on our agenda. We dare not neglect or reject them. Our generation has bequeathed to them a desperate period of history, fraught with all manner of problems. The very least that we Christians can do is their prioritize their welfare on our missions agenda and do everything in our power to lead them to Christ and His Kingdom.

Children in crises

Millions of children in our world face crises that their elders have created. They encounter sadness and suffering unprecedented in previous generations.

In a world filled with terrorism, war and famine, women and children are the saddest victims. On every continent they are maligned, victimized, abused and criticized through no fault of their own. They have not created the horrors that abound. They are the innocent inheritors of a world blighted by the madness of their predecessors.

Abortion indicates the perceived value of children

The shocking statistics relevant to abortion in our modern “enlightened” world reveal how little value is placed on the life of a child. Throughout the world, on every continent, millions of children are murdered annually before they even leave the womb. The lack of value that our generation places on human life is sadly seen through this savage and cynical exercise. Children that threaten to inconvenience their prospective parents are murdered in the womb. Their lives and futures are seen to be totally expendable.

Victims of war

In the many regional wars that are being fought around our world, women and children are the main victims. More than 2 million innocent children have been killed and a further 15 million have been disabled or traumatised. More than 1 million others have become orphans and some 12 million have been made homeless.

Child soldiers

On the other side of the war equation are the children who have been forced to become soldiers, many of whom are as young as five. Children have been forcibly recruited into terrorist armies because they are obedient, versatile, cheap and disposable. Children presently constitute 25% of the world’s fighting personnel. In some wars they have been used to investigate mine fields. They have been forced to cross the fields to discover safe tracks. Thousands have been blown to pieces in the process.

In order to harden their childish perceptions of life the children are usually brutalised by their superiors. In addition to verbal and emotional brutalizing most of them, male and female, are also sexually abused in an horrific manner. They are also forced to commit brutal murders, often being forced to savagely murder young innocent babies.

Refugees

Chaotic conditions around the world have created millions of refugees living under appalling conditions with little or no hope for the future. Four out of every five of these refugees are women and children forced to flee from their natural homes and living in make shift, sub standard conditions with severely restricted food supplies and little medical aid.

Sexually exploited

It is estimated that there are some ten million children involved in the international sex industry producing profits of \$80 Bill. Annually of which the child sex slaves receive nothing. Many of the children have been sold into the trade by their impoverished parents. Others have been kidnapped and forced to work in brothels. The pornography trade also specialises in children. Some of the most popular videos feature the sexually oriented murder of young children.

AIDS victims

In Africa alone there are some 28 million AIDS orphans. A further 400 million children in Africa are HIV positive. This dreadful killer disease introduced by irresponsible adults is blighting the innocent lives of millions of children world wide. These children face a devastating future with no hope of living a normal life. They have been viciously robbed of their childhood and plunged into a nightmare of despair through no fault of their own.

Girl children

One of the saddest groups of disadvantaged children in the world are girls who are discriminated against, abused, tortured, sold, thrown out or killed simply because they are female children. Many cultures despise female children regarding them as an undesirable liability. Male children are valued because of their working potential. Within a family structure in such cultures little girls become unpaid slaves, child brides, child mothers, or prostitutes. They are the last to be fed, educated, or valued. They are a social nonentity. Millions of them live in sewers rather than remaining in such a "home."

These children are a mission field

The children I have mentioned, together with billions of other children whose circumstances may be more "normal" but who also lack any kind of hope or expectation for the future, constitute the biggest unreached people group on earth. The one thing they all need above all else is a message of hope for the future. They need to hear God's Word that promises,

Jer 29:11

11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (NIV)

However, they need more than the mere words, they need a practical demonstration of the truth and reality of those words in the form of true Christian compassion, care and deeds. The Christian church must demonstrate to them the reality of its concern in works of kindness, compassion and care.

Looking through the 4/14 window

Much has been said amongst missiologists about the 10/40 window (latitude and longitude) encompassing for the most part those nations of North Africa and Asia. An even more compelling target group is seen through the 4/14 window, targeting the children of our world between the ages of 4 and 14. This age group will soon comprise 50% of the total world population. If we do not effectively reach them we will neglect a vastly important people group.

Adjusting our vision

If the church is to reach this great people group there must be a huge, immediate change of perspective because currently we are failing miserably to reach them. The entire church must quickly awaken to the great challenge of children in crisis. We must begin by getting a fresh vision for those children on the very doorsteps of our churches. For the most part our Sunday Schools and children's ministries are not reaching children in large numbers. Neither are we providing through these ministries a realistic and holistic approach that modern children require. Children of this generation are faced with and challenged by all kinds of social problems that previous generations did not know. Many young children are alcoholics and drug users. Many are snared by sexual practices that destroy their childhood innocence and traumatize their whole life.

Modernising our ministries

Few churches have children's ministries that are appropriate for the contemporary situation. The traditional "Sunday School" approach is inadequate to meet the challenge of young children who experience various forms of abuse within their own family situation. Millions of children are living on the streets of our great cities, finding the rough conditions of street existence preferable to the abusive conditions of their own "homes."

The primary emphasis of our message must remain the redemptive message of the cross, but it must be presented as a positive message of hope rather than a negative message of condemnation. It must be presented in a format compatible to our target audience. The greatest need of the young masses that populate our world is a reassuring message of hope for the future. It must be a compassionate message of God's grace that redeems, heals and comforts the human heart. It must be the message of the Kingdom that offers "Righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom 10:19)

Recognise and acknowledge their importance

The church generally must first fully recognise the importance of this people group. Each of these young people are immortal souls for whom Christ has died. They are the fruit of the womb, the reward of the Lord. God passionately

loves every individual life. He has a very special concern for all of immature age, declaring a serious judgement on all who abuse or misuse them.

Matt 18:6

6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. (NIV)

Children and young persons are immensely high on God’s agenda of priorities and must be high on ours too. A preacher was once asked what results had accrued from a Gospel service at which he had preached that night. His reply was to the effect that 2.5. persons had responded to the Gospel appeal. “Oh” said the inquirer, “You mean two adults and one child!” “Not so replied the preacher. I mean two children and one adult.” He further explained. “When an adult is converted, a soul is saved. But when a child receives Christ a life and a soul has been saved!”

Target them specifically

Eve*****

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*****cious tendency to under estimate the younger generations of their society. In doing so they tend to patronise them, presuming them to be immature, ignorant and of lesser value than their elders. Consequently their valuation of them is lessened. It is frequently presumed that younger = less valuable.

Many Christians patronisingly speak of young people as the “church of tomorrow” inferring that their value will not accrue until some time in the near or distant future. The real truth is that they are actually meant to be an integral part of the “church of today.” God specifically includes them in the great End Time harvest He has predicted. Their value will not be realised when they reach an age of greater maturity. They are inestimably valuable to God NOW. They are a vital, integral and indispensable value to God and His church right now!

Every effort must be made

It is imperative that every missions strategy should include and highly emphasise the value of children and young persons. Every missions organisation must prioritise the importance of children. Reaching and winning them must be placed at the very top of our agenda. Unless we do so, we dismally fail God, His church, the world and ourselves.

♥ The foregoing information on the plight of children was gained largely from a most challenging book; CHILDREN IN CRISIS: A NEW COMMITMENT.

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Chapter Eleven

POWER EVANGELISM IN CHURCH PLANTING

As we search the Scriptures for principles relating to effective Church Planting we cannot ignore the important part that power evangelism played in the birth and growth of the early church. Throughout the book of Acts, we see multiple examples of the effectiveness of power encounters and the manner in which such encounters

- opened doors of utterance,
- attracted large crowds of people, and
- helped to establish the church in numerous new areas.

The effectiveness of Power Evangelism is certainly not restricted to Bible days. There are many modern examples of the effective employment of this Bible ordained ministry and its effectiveness in breaking into new areas of witness and church planting. The great twentieth century revival in Latin America, has been powerfully sponsored by supernatural signs and wonders. The phenomenal growth of the charismatically endowed churches in South America are an indisputable evidence of several things:-

- The power of God has not been withdrawn from the church.
- Miracles are still being evidenced in the 20th Century.
- Power Evangelism is still the most effective method of breaking new ground.

1: Power Evangelism as exercised by Jesus.

Jesus is our supreme role model for every aspect of our life. This is certainly true in respect of our ministry. He is our supreme Biblical Model. No Christian would ever want to dispute that. He is also our finest example as a Minister of God. As we seek to be fashioned in His image we must acknowledge that the supernatural aspect of His life is undeniable. If we would wish to pattern our ministry on His, then we must believe to see the supernatural manifested in our ministry.

He is our

- **Glorious Example.**
- **Wonderful Inspiration.**
- **Main Motivation factor.**

2: Why did Jesus Heal the Sick?

- **To fulfill His prophetic ministry.**

Matthew tells us that, *"He healed them all, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'Himself took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses'".* (Isaiah. 53: 4-6. Matt. :16,17.)

- **To express His compassion.**

Numerous scriptures speak of the compassion of Jesus motivating Him to meet the great needs of the people. Jesus was *"moved with compassion, and healed their sicknesses."* (Matt. 14:14. 20:34. Mk. 1:40, 41. 5:19. 9:22.)

- **To convey the mercy of God.**

Speaking of Epaphroditus, Paul says, *"The Lord had mercy on him, and on me also, and He healed Epaphroditus."* (Phil. 2:27.)

- **To prove that God had truly sent Him.**

The healings and miracles which accompanied the ministry of Jesus were said to be signs or confirmations that God had sent Him, approved Him and was with Him. Peter calls Him, *"A Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you."* (Acts. 2:22.)

- **To destroy the works of the Devil.**

Sickness is a work of the devil and Jesus was manifested to destroy it.

"For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John. 3:8.)

"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth, with the Holy Ghost and power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil for God was with Him." (Acts. 10: 38.)

- **To manifest the works of God.**

"That the works of God might be manifest in Him, I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day." (John. 9 : 1-7.)

- **to manifest the Glory of God.**

The mighty works of God were performed by Jesus that His Father might be glorified. Standing before the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus said to Martha, *"If you would believe you would see the Glory of God."* (John. 11 :40.)

These are all excellent reason why we should desire to emulate Jesus and minister healing to the sick and afflicted.

They are mighty indicators that the Kingdom has arrived, and they should accompany our ministries.

3: The Great Commission includes Healing the Sick. (Mark. 16: 15-22.)

"Go ye therefore into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature and these signs shall follow them that believe. In my Name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them. they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover. And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."

"Jesus went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him." (Acts. 10 :38.)

Healing manifestations and miracles :-

- **Will accompany those who "GO", into all the world to preach the Gospel.**
- **Confirmed the validity of the Gospel to unbelievers.**
- **Laid the foundations of the early church world wide.**

4: We must "GO".

In order to see the fulfillment of this promise we must first be prepared to GO out and preach the Gospel. God blesses our going because.

- **It is a step of Obedience.**
- **It is a step of Faith.**

**Some preachers never see the signs
following their ministry
because they never "GO"
in obedience to God by faith.**

The early disciples were men of faith and obedience. They began to do what Jesus had commanded them, going into all the world and preaching the Gospel everywhere, and God accompanied them to confirm their message with signs and wonders. God is still the same today. If we will obey Him, we can expect Him to confirm His Word with miracles and healings.

The particular methodology outlined in Mark. 16 :18. **"they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover"**, can be identified as "Evangelistic Healing".

This is the method commanded by Jesus for those who would go into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature.

This is one of the signs which He said would accompany them.

- **Go into all the world, preach the Gospel to every creature.**
- **These signs shall follow them that believe.**
- **In My Name they shall cast out devils.**
- **They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.**

"and they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following."

5: How to heal the Sick.

The

Mini*****

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well as our sins.

- **He has provided healing as well as forgiveness.**
- **He healed the sick throughout His earthly ministry.**
- **He commissioned His disciples to heal the sick.**
- **He is the same, yesterday, today and forever.**

"Then He called His twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases, and He sent them forth to preach the Kingdom of God, and to heal the sick". Luke 9: 1, 2.

"and they departed and went through the towns, preaching the Good News, and healing everywhere." Luke. 9 :6.

He has never withdrawn that Commission.

The Good News is that Jesus is alive.
That He still has power to save, and to heal the sick.
Some preachers preach the bad news, instead of the good news.
They preach that Jesus no longer manifests His power.
They preach that miracles ceased with the death of the apostles.
They explain away the miracles of the Bible.
They explain why it is futile to believe for miracles today.

The Bible says that **FAITH COMES BY HEARING THE WORD OF GOD.** (Rom. 10:17.)

But when these preachers are through, faith doesn't come, — it leaves.

Some preachers never mention or encourage faith.
Some undermine and destroy peoples faith.
Some excuse the need for real faith.
But these preachers never see signs or wonders, or healings.
And the people to whom they preach never receive healing.

Jesus always encouraged people to believe.

"Said I not to you that if you would believe you would see the Glory of God?"

Paul's preaching always stimulated faith.

Acts. 14: 8-10.

"And there sat a certain man at Lystra, crippled in his feet from his mother's womb, who had never walked. The same man heard Paul speak; Who steadfastly looking at him and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet!" And he leaped and walked."

As the man listened to Paul, faith began to grow in his heart.
When Paul realized this, he further encouraged him to exercise that faith.
He commanded him to "Stand upright on your feet."

Your Word of Authority.

Paul's preaching inspired faith.
We must never be afraid to preach in a manner which inspires faith.
We must declare the Good News of the Kingdom of God.
We must also encourage people to believe and to exercise their faith.
We should encourage them to do things which they could not previously do.

6: Praying the Prayer of faith.

"And the prayer of faith shall save the Sick, and the Lord shall raise him up."

(James. 5:15.)

The Bible makes it clear that prayer is only effective when it is offered in faith.

"But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord." (James. 1: 6,7.)

The Prayer of Faith.

- Is based solely on God's Word.

True faith is not moved or motivated by anything but God's Word.
It is not based on sense knowledge, feelings, or human knowledge.
It stands solely on what God declares.
It does not have its own ideas or theories. It subscribes to the truth of God's Word.
It does not build doctrine on what it understands, but on what God declares.

- Faith knows the Will of God.

Faith knows the Will of God in respect of healing because it accepts what His Word declares.

- Faith has a definite, specific objective.

Bible type faith does not waver before diagnoses, or prognoses. It stands upon God's Word that *"with God nothing shall be impossible."*
Faith's asking, believing, and receiving is specific not vague or abstract.
Some preachers never know when their prayer has been answered because they never asked for anything specific.

- Faith has the right motive.

Faith does not act for its own benefit or fulfillment.

It operates with the right, pure motives.

- **Faith has a bold confession.**

Faith is not afraid to boldly declare what God has already declared.

- **Faith's actions agree with its confession.**

Faith is not only strong on talk, it is also strong on action.
Faith does what it says, acts like it talks.

- **Faith Asks and "Receives."**

Faith does not only pray to God, it determines to receive from Him too.

- **Faith continues steadfastly.**

If the answer to faith's prayer is not evident immediately, faith persists until that answer comes.

- **Faith gives the glory to God.**

Abraham, *"Staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform."* (Romans. 4 : 20, 21.)

Principles that produce Healings.

- **Preaching the Word of God.**

Apostolic preaching was Christ exalting.
They preached that Jesus is **Lord**.
Lord of creation.
Lord of redemption.
Lord over Satan.
Lord over sin, sickness and demons.

- **Encouraging people's faith.**

"Then Peter said, 'Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee. In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.' And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up; and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength." (Acts. 3:6, 7.)

- **Exercising spiritual authority.**

"And His Name, through faith in His Name, has made this man strong...yes the faith which is by Him, has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." (Acts. 3 : 16.)

- **Speaking with authority by the power of the Spirit.**

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said to them...." (Acts. 4 : 8.)

The Apostles did not speak with enticing words of human wisdom, but with the power and demonstration of the Spirit.

- **Acting with holy boldness.**

They were familiar with God's healing covenant.

They were eye witnesses of Christ's healing ministry.

They possessed a positive assurance of faith.

They acted with pure motives.

- **They performed many signs and wonders.**

Miracles dramatize the Gospel presentation.

Miracles authenticate the validity of the Gospel.

Miracles attract the multitudes.

- **Miracles establish people in the Faith.**

"My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of men's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and in power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor. 2: 4,5.)

8: They shall recover. (Mark. 16 : 18.)

Not all healings are immediate or instantaneous. This was true in Bible days and it is true today.

In Luke 17 : 12- 15. we find Jesus cleansing ten lepers of whom it is said, "And it came to pass that **as they went** they were healed."

LEARNING ACTIVITIES.

- 1. What three things did power evangelism accomplish in the early church?**
- 2. State three of the reasons why Jesus healed the sick.**
- 3. Explain why those three things should encouraged us to seek to emulate Him.**
- 4. Why might we expect that obeying the Great Commission would be accompanied by Signs and Wonders?**
- 5. Please give three characteristics of the Prayer of faith.**
- 6. Please state three things which would help people to be healed.**

Chapter Twelve

ESTABLISHING THE CHURCH

"May the God of all grace, who has called us to share His eternal glory, by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you complete, stablish, strengthen and settle you. To whom be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (1 Pet. 5 : 10, 11.)

This scripture has a particular application to the theme we are presently considering. i.e. establishing a new fellowship.

- The God of all grace.

If we have managed to bring a new fellowship of believers into being, it is the grace of God that has accomplished this. Only He is able to accomplish such a task. We therefore need to keep this in mind and to realize that the future of this work too, is all in His capable hands.

We cannot take any credit for what has been accomplished.

Nor should we be too intensely concerned about the future of it.

It is the Lord's work, and He is responsible for it.

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*****rit to successfully steer us through this period,

we will give Him opportunity to put the seal of God upon this newly birthed fellowship.

This early period is extremely critical. We are laying the foundations for this fellowship which will influence it for many years to come. I have personally observed over many years that the foundations of a church are extremely important. Some churches never recover from bad decisions which are made during the initial formation of the fellowship. Be sensitive to this challenge and determine to lay good, solid, enduring foundations.

- ***Make you complete.***

The word rendered "complete" is frequently translated "perfect" in other versions. But in this context, complete is very appropriate. It conveys the idea of completeness, togetherness, harmony, oneness, unity, integration. These are all factors which a new group of believers should hold high on their list of priorities. If these ingredients are part of the foundations, this Church has the right foundation upon which to build a strong congregation.

- ***Stablish.***

This word is linked to establish, stabilize, to make firm and steadfast. It can well be applied to the foundations of a building. If these are not adequate then whatever is built upon them is in danger of collapsing.

- ***Strengthen.***

This word may be applied to the building which one might erect on the firm foundations. It needs to be a robust, strong, building. To withstand adverse weather, winds and cyclones.

- ***Settle you.***

The original word translated settle is certainly applicable to the whole idea of laying a good foundation. However, a biblical word study will reveal that its roots are also linked to some other concepts which are also important to our theme. Some of the ideas within the root word are —advise, commend, appoint, ordain, and set forth. These are all concepts to which we shall be referring briefly as we consider some of those matters which are essential to laying a good foundation.

Let us now consider briefly some of the essential factors.

1: Firm foundations.

- Salvation.

You must make be sure that the nucleus of people who will form the basis of this fellowship are all truly born again. There are some doctrinal issues about which we may "agree to differ", but this is not one of them. In our manual on soul winning we have emphasized the need to have a solid, biblically based assurance of true salvation. Take all the converts through this material. Dialogue with them. Draw them out. Have each one make a clear confession of faith and give vital testimony to this fact.

This is particularly important when you begin to appoint office bearers in the church. Sometimes there may be an initial shortage of people qualified and adept at the various tasks which must be undertaken. This may tempt you to appoint someone who is not a true believer and wholly committed to Christ, and to Christian ethics. You can make all kinds of problems for yourself and the church in this way.

- The Bible.

Please ensure right from the outset, that your people are exposed to the teachings of Gods Word. Aim to be a "Bible based Church".

Make Bible study and teaching a priority.

Plan to build this fellowship around the truths of God's Word.

- Fellowship.

Here is a word with numerous connotations, some of which are not necessarily biblical. The biblical word translated fellowship, is "Koinonia", which essentially implies commitment to a partnership. A good marriage can be a fine illustration of this, — where two persons are completely committed each to the other.

So look for commitment from the people.

- Commitment firstly to God and His Kingdom.
- Commitment to Jesus, His teachings and His person.
- Commitment to Biblical principles and ethics.
- Commitment to fellow members of the Body of Christ.
- Commitment to those believers who are part of the local Body of which you are a member.

Fellowship together can take many forms :-

- Congregational celebration.
- House church inter-action.

- Communal relaxation.

- **Prayer.**

The members of the early church continued steadfastly in several things one of which was united prayers.

Their prayer meetings became the power house for their activities.

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

- **Evangelism.**

Immediately after the founding of a church, particularly when that church has been founded through some form of evangelism, is the time to begin encouraging the continuance of a powerful evangelistic influence.

Don't let the new converts' ardour cool off. Don't let their zeal wane. Whilst they are still in the fervor of their first love lay a strong emphasis on witnessing and leading people to Christ. This is the time when many of the people still have close ties with friends who are not yet Christians. Encourage them to maintain contact with their friends and bring them along to church.

2: Leadership.

Good leadership is essential to effective growth and development in a local church.

If you have pioneered a new church but do not plan to remain indefinitely :

- **Do not leave the church too soon.**

Whilst the church is in the enthusiasm of early growth try to encourage that pattern as long as possible. The spirit of revival and growth is exciting and attractive. While ever a fire is burning, people will want to come and warm themselves there.

- **Do not remain there too long.**

However, there is also a danger that you may stay too long. Remember that the ministry which is successful in opening up a new area is not always the one that is suited to remain there. In the initial stages of a building project, the 'bull dozers' have an important role to play, but once the foundations are laid and the building begins to take shape, those same 'bull dozers' can cause a lot of damage. Once the evangelist has done his work, a shepherd needs to take over. It is a different ministry entirely.

Nevertheless it is often the case that the pioneer also becomes the pastor. I would say that in the planting of smaller churches, e.g house churches, this is frequently the case and has proven eminently successful.

- **Make sure that good leadership is in place before you leave.**

If it is your purpose to move on once the church has been founded take good care to ensure that adequate leadership is in place before you leave. Any delay in replacing the leadership can be disastrous. The new believers are often quite vulnerable at this stage and do need a shepherd.

- **Ordain the new leadership to their task.**

As the founder of the new church, you need to pass on your mantle, and give your blessing to the new leader and the people need to be aware of this. They need to know that the new leader has your confidence and your blessing. Do whatever you can to have them transfer their loyalty from you to the incoming leader.

- **Be supportive and helpful in every way.**

If you leave the area always be positive in your attitude towards the new leader. Should any of the people continue to contact you, strongly encourage them in their loyalty to the new leader. If there are any real problems there, make contact with your replacement and not with the local members.

3: Church Membership.

There are two aspects to church membership,

- **spiritual.**

This concerns God's role in adding people to His Church.

The Church of the firstborn have their names written in Heaven.

(Heb.12:22-24.)

"But they are written in the Lamb's book of life." Rev. 21 : 27.

"and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts.2:47.)

This "adding to the Church" by the Lord is a spiritual activity of the Holy Spirit in which He sovereignly adds people to a church, bonding them to the other members who are part of that fellowship. Once God has done this we need to beware that "what God has joined together, no man should tear asunder." Some Christians move much too easily from one church to another, frequently without seeking the Lord's permission to do so. There is definitely a function in which God adds people to a particular fellowship and we need to observe and honour His wisdom in doing so.

- **natural.**

Some Christians are suspicious and unconvinced about the need to assume some kind of legal membership of a particular church. They believe it to be unscriptural. However there are numerous indications in the Bible that books were kept and that people's names were recorded in them.

The Israelites had their names recorded in the books of their nation.
The growth of the early church was recorded statistically.

Jesus commenced with twelve disciples.
Then He ordained a further seventy.
More than 500 saw Him ascend into Heaven.
3,000 were added on the Day of Pentecost.
A further 5,000 were added in Acts.4:4.

There is a very definite advantage in having a properly constituted membership to which the members are legally joined.

- **It is a measure of commitment.**
- **There is security in such a commitment.**
- **Discipline can be properly administered when necessary.**
- **Legal responsibilities can be properly discharged.**
- **Business undertakings and commitments can be legally undertaken.**

N.B. In certain circumstances, because of political or religious restrictions, it is unwise to keep formal records or lists of members or adherents. In such circumstances refrain from doing so.

4: Discipleship.

Each local church is responsible before God for the effective discipling of its members.

This is one of the most important functions of the Apostolic ministries which God places in the Church.

"And He, (Christ) gave to the Church Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers and Evangelists, to prepare and equip the saints to do the work of the ministry and edify the Body." (Eph. 4 : 11,12.)

- Discipleship is the apprenticeship system of the church.
- Jesus spent most of His ministry discipling 12 men.
- They in turn were to commit what they had learned to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also. (2 Tim. 2:2.)
- Discipleship implies teaching by example as well as word.
- Discipleship demands discipline.
- The Church Planting Training Program is a form of Discipleship training.

5: Stewardship and Finances.

It is important to approach this subject positively as early as possible in the life of the new congregation. It is essential that the people, as a congregation, hold a right and biblical concept of financial stewardship. Withholding

God's proper financial due, can cause Him to withhold His blessings upon a church. (Malachai. 3: 8-12.)

Understanding the divine principle that "it is more blessed to give than to receive", can release great blessing into a life or congregation. Conversely, the failure to understand and practice this may "close the windows of Heaven."

It is also extremely important for a church to understand their responsibility to minister to their leadership in material blessings. *"If we have sown unto you in spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"* (1 Cor. 9 :11.)

"If the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they are under obligation to minister to them in spiritual things." (Rom. 15 : 27.)

Some biblical principles about giving.

1. Should give ourselves to the Lord first. (2 Cor. 8 :5.)
2. Give willingly. (2 Cor. 8 : 3,12.)
3. Give cheerfully. (2 Cor. 9 : 7.)
4. Give generously. (2 Cor. 8:2. 9:13.)
5. Give proportionately. (2 Cor. 9 :6. 8: 14,15.)
6. Give regularly. (1 Cor. 16 : 1,2.)
7. Give systematically. (2 Cor. 9 : 7.)
8. Give lovingly. (2 Cor. 8 : 24.)
9. Give thankfully. (2 Cor. 9 : 11,12.)
10. Give unto the Lord and His saints. (2 Cor. 9 : 12, 13.)

6: Facilities and Buildings.

Soon after the formation of a new congregation it is likely that the matter of a church building or facility will be raised. This frequently occurs because of the problems often associated with renting or leasing premises such as

- Inconsistent availability.
- Unsuitable atmosphere.
- Rising rental charges.
- The necessity to move equipment in and out.
- Having to move from place to place.

These are all very real problems and promote an understandable desire to acquire permanent premises.

The main problem in acquiring by building or purchasing a permanent facility is the matter of finances, (or lack of!) The new fellowship which has no lack of finances is fortunate indeed. In most places contemporary situations the cost of land and of building has become a serious problem for most churches. Where the decision to build or purchase is taken too soon it is frequently true that other important matters must suffer financial privation.

My advice would be :-

- Rent or lease as long as it is possible.
- Prioritize the need to take care of the leader and his family.
- Prioritize other responsibilities and challenges.
- Do not undertake a large loan too early. Some fellowships, burdened with paying off a large loan, neglect other important commitments.

A congregation is in a far better position to acquire their own premises when the congregation has grown beyond say 300 members.

When the decision to build or buy is to be made, several factors should be borne in mind.

- **Visibility.**

Endeavor to get some place which is conspicuous so that people are aware of your existence. In such a position you may also be able to have some appropriate signs to arrest public attention and advertise your presence.

- **Accessibility.**

Try to locate yourself in a position that is accessible and easy to reach. If there is public transport available, try to get adjacent to this. People must be able to reach your facility without too much difficulty.

- **Size.**

If you are building or purchasing, endeavor to acquire a facility which will give you room to expand. Or build something which is easily extended to accommodate a greater number of people. Many churches purchase something which meets their immediate needs and then when they grow and need more space the price required is exorbitant. Remember that land and building costs are probably never going to decrease.

- **Appropriateness to the community.**

You must also bear in mind the nature of the community you are called to reach and let your building be appropriate to the life style and culture of the people.

- **Put flexibility into your building.**

The more frequently a church building can be used for legitimate and edifying activities, the more valuable that building is to its owners. It is sad to see some church buildings standing virtually idle for six days each week. Make your building flexible to accommodate numerous activities other than the straight "preaching to the people" model.

- **Don't aim to make your building too orthodox.**

The traditional image and style of a church building, to suit a preacher and congregation, is severely limiting and restrictive. It really serves no useful purpose to build in that "traditional church style." People today are not impressed with the churchy style. In fact the style frequently reflects a mentality which is antiquated and obsolete. There is a severe limitation on the kind of activities you can successfully conduct in such a building.

- **Reflecting good stewardship.**

I am distressed about some churches who invest large amounts of finance in lavish premises. So much money is tied up in bricks and mortar and is unavailable for the real task of the church with its evangelism and missions.

Jesus did NOT commission us to erect buildings and certainly not lavish, expensive ones which divert millions of dollars into real estate. It is a tragedy to see millions of people under-nourished and starving in some parts of the world whilst the church in other places, is spending mega dollars on elaborate buildings. God will one day judge us on our stewardship and what we did with the resources we controlled.

I have heard Dr. Ralph Mahoney make a powerful statement on many occasions and I subscribe to it whole heartedly. He says,

"Put your money into the Message, not the mortar."

7: Plant a Vision for

Church Planting International
PO Box 250, Mt. Gravatt, Queensland 4122, Australia

*****he people are kept fully occupied in the work of the ministry. The more people in any congregation who are active, the more that church will thrive in every way. Don't encourage the people to be spectators, but participators.

In our church planting course we deal more fully with the principles of growth and development. We also encourage every Church Planter to commence a CHURCH PLANTING TRAINING CENTRE in each new church that you pioneer. Get the members active. Train and prepare them for the work of the ministry.

**"Do the work of an Evangelist
and make full proof of your ministry!"**

LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

- 1. Give three of the ingredients required for a firm foundation.**
- 2. Please state three principles to be observed in appointing new leadership.**
- 3. Comment briefly on the two aspects of church membership.**
- 4. State five biblical injunctions concerning giving.**
- 5. What are three factors to look for in the choice of a building?**

CHURCH PLANTING.
Philosophy & Strategy Questionnaire.

1: WHY do you want to plant churches?

Positive reasons.

- a: God's Call on your life.
Expressed in consistent inner urge.
Consistent desire to exercise ministry gifts.

- b: Strong desire to win people to Christ.
Continuing interest in people's spiritual direction and welfare.

- c: A desire to expand God's Kingdom.
A heart-felt concern to see God's Kingdom extended

- d: A Burden to reach a specific people group.
A specific people group occupy major interest.

- e: Desire to see a "fellowship" birthed.
Understanding benefit and blessing of being part of a Koinonia fellowship.
Desire to "belong" to a loving fellowship.
Desire to give and receive ministry and encouragement.

Negative Reasons.

- a: You want to preach to someone.
Captive audience. Someone to "preach at."

- b: You desire a position as a leader.
Personal aspiration and ambition.

- c: A personal, or theological reason.
Wanting to gather people to yourself, or your doctrinal persuasion.

- d: To boost your sense of self worth.
Innate insecurity that craves attention.

2: Church Planting is a serious calling and responsibility.

- a: Christ gave His life for the church. Gal 1:4. 2:20. Eph 5:25. 1 Tim 2:6.

- b: God's name is at stake.

- c: Birthing a church demands soul travail. Isa 53:11. 66:8. Gal 4:19. 1 Thess 2:9.

d: Church Planting is worthy of much more than selfish ambition.

3: What kind of church will you plant?

a: A New Testament style church. Acts 2: 42.

b: A biblically authentic church.

c: A lively church.

d: An attractive church.

e: A contemporary style church.

f: A culturally authentic church.

g: A loving and caring church.

h: Church where people's needs are ministered to.

i: Where believers are disciplined.

j: Church that believes in planting other churches.

k: A church committed to missions.

QUESTION TIME.

1: Has God called you to plant a church?

2: Why do you believe so?

3: How has God confirmed your call?

4: To whom has He called you?

5: Where will you endeavour to plant that church?

4: What does a Church Planter look like?

a: He looks like you and me.

An average type of person, with a call of God on their life.

b: He enjoys good family relationships.

Why is this so important?

1 Tim 3:5. How shall he take care of the church?

1 Tim 5:8. He that cares not for his own is worse than an infidel.

Eph 5:28.

c: Is spiritually mature.

1 Tim 3:6. Not a novice, lest being lifted up he fall into condemnation of the devil.

d: Is a people person.

The ministry is about two things. God, and people.

e: Is an evangelist.

2 Tim 4:5. Do the work of an evangelist.

f: Is a visionary.

Acts 26:19. Not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

g: Is a motivated person.

Phil 4:13. "This one thing I do, reaching forth, pressing towards the mark."

h: Has leadership characteristics.

i: Is a person of faith.

Heb 11:6. Without faith is impossible to please God.

j: Possesses patience and perseverance.

Heb 6:12. Who, through faith and patience, obtained the promise.

5: What do His team members look like?

a: Are also called to Church planting.

In some different capacity.

Various ministries must complement each other.

b: Are fully committed to the task.

c: They share your vision and burden.

d: Recognise leadership authority.

e: Can work with others as a team.

f: Are always willing to learn.

g: A person of Integrity.

6: Some team profiles.

Team members must be Able. Willing. Assimilate.

a: Evangelist.

b: Worship leader.

c: Counsellor.

d: Shepherd.

e: Administrator. Organiser.

f: Facilitators.

g: Labourers.

h: Children's workers.

i: Youth workers.

j: Musicians.

7: Recruit your Intercessors.

a: Find a team leader.

b: Recruit some prayer partners.

c: Keep them well informed.

d: Honour and appreciate their ministry.

8: Investigating the territory.

a: Identify your target area.
Geographically. Culturally. Linguistically.

b: Recognise and Identify Community needs.

c: Identify the power centres.
Spiritual. Political. Religious. Social.

d: Recruit appropriate ministries.

d: Train your workers accordingly.

10: Developing your vision.

a: True Vision is God given.
Acts 26:19 The heavenly vision.

b: Vision must be focused.

c: A Vision must have dimensions.

d: Vision must be clearly communicated.
Everyone must understand and grasp the vision.

e: Vision must be shared by others.
One person alone, cannot fulfil a vision.

f: The Vision must have a faith quotient.
Beyond the grasp of the natural.

g: The Vision must be realistic and attainable.

Creating a Spiritual Atmosphere through Worship

Gerald Rowlands, the author of this article, was for ten years the Director of Praise and Worship at the Christian Celebration during the Feast of Tabernacles. This annual event is conducted in Jerusalem and often attracts crowds in excess of 10,000 people who are both Christians and Jews. The event is renowned internationally as a model of Davidic Worship.

“ True Worship creates a spiritual atmosphere in which miracles can happen!”



**What might happen if this definition of worship
was embraced by every church?
If the primary desire of a congregation was to
come into a place where the presence of God
would produce spiritual miracles,
how different would our church services be?**

Contents

1	What is true worship?	171
2	The Stairway to Heaven	180
3	Preparing the Way of the Lord	182
4	What is Atmosphere?	187
5	What creates a Spiritual Atmosphere?	192
6	What are the Miracles?	196
7	The Power of Music	199
8	Congregational Worship	203
9	Leading a Worship Service	212
10	Practical thoughts about the Worship Service	220

What is true Worship?

A classic, biblical definition of worship is found in :-

Deut 6:5

5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. (NIV)

It was reiterated and augmented by Jesus in :-

Matt 22:37-40

37 Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

38 "This is the first and great commandment.

39 "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

40 "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (NKJ)

Worship is expressing your love to God unreservedly with your whole being, Spirit, Soul and Body!

The addition Jesus made was, *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself"*. He reminds us that true worship has two dimensions, perpendicular and horizontal. The true worshipper is to love God with all his heart, soul and strength and love his neighbor as himself. True Worship therefore is the uninhibited expressing of our love to God in every way prescribed in the Bible.

True worship is declaring and eulogizing the WORTH-SHIP of God. We should do this directly to Him with verbal and physical declarations of our love and esteem. We should also declare His worth to our fellow man by the manner in which we regard, esteem and treat him that he too may begin to glorify God.

Matt 5:16

16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (NKJ)

One objective of Worship is to Glorify God by inviting, experiencing and celebrating His dynamic presence.

Such an experience of God's presence is:-

a. Discerned initially in one's spirit.

God is a spirit. His presence is a spiritual presence. It is recognized initially in one's own spirit, the deepest, most intimate part of one's being. In order to recognize and perceive God's presence we must be spiritually inclined and sensitized.

Jacob was a carnal man by nature. God was at times unable to get through his natural resistance. However, when Jacob fell asleep his natural mind was in neutral and God was able to speak to his spirit through a vivid and remarkable dream. On awakening Jacob realized that God had been in that place all the time but his natural mind had not discerned His presence, nor heard His voice.

Gen 28:16-17

16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it."

17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven." (NIV)

b. Experienced in the release of positive emotions

Although experiencing God's presence is not primarily an emotional experience, the profound effect of it is usually conveyed to the emotions. So there is usually an emotional response to a spiritual experience of God's presence. That response may be one of tears, or it may be an emotional elation and joy. Whatever form it may take, it will eventually produce a positive, beneficial result.

Unfortunately many sincere Christians have an almost paranoid fear of emotional expression. As soon as they feel emotional expression arising within they suppress it. This hinders and stifles their ability to enter into and experience the atmosphere of God's presence. They must realize that the spirit and soul are linked almost inextricably together. So intricate is their mutual involvement they are frequently incapable of being untangled. The Bible confirms the close nature of this link

Heb 4:12

12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (NIV)

It often requires the supernatural discernment of the living Word to discern between soul and spirit.

c. Frequently accompanied by physical response

The physical or bodily response may be one of trembling, prostration, falling down. It can be expressed with clapping, raising the hands, dancing, jumping. It is hard to conceive that a person could receive a visitation from God, experience a normal emotional response to it, yet have no physical reaction. Bible characters often had emotional and physical responses to a visitation from God. Such experiences will not be detrimental or harmful. On the contrary they will be therapeutic and beneficial. Whenever the physical response is truly Spirit engendered, it will cause an ultimate good.

**Worship is not a
formula,
it is the continuing,
patient development
of a love relationship.**

It is the keeping of a love tryst in which the chief aim is to further and deepen the mutual love and esteem each of the other. An opportunity to further investigate the charms and appeal of their lover. To exchange words of endearment and mutual appreciation. Worship is the furtherance of a romantic association between a redeemed child of God and his Redeemer. The words of a chorus express the intimacy of such a communion.

When I look into your holiness,
When I gaze into your loveliness,
When all things that surround
Become shadows in the light of you.
When I've found the joy of reaching your heart,
When my will becomes enthralled in your love,
When all things that surround
Become shadows in the light of you:
I worship you, I worship you,
The reason I live, is to worship you.
I worship you, I worship you,
The reason I live, is to worship you.

(Wayne and Cathy Perrin, Copyright, Integrity's Hosanna Music 1980)

Let's look into the Song of Solomon

This delightful story portrays a developing love relationship between a shepherdess and a King. It is a type of the believer and her King, Jesus. From the moment she first sees, she is smitten with love for him. Her love is whole heartedly reciprocated and begins to develop through a series of meetings that are typical of our worship of Christ.

This book gives the dialogue of a king, his wife, and her friends in the king's harem. The man and woman described their love for each other, while the friends praised the woman's beauty and her favored place before the king. The reader hears about the beauty of love from several directions. The particular setting was the harem of King Solomon.

What does this development require?

a. The initial attraction was physical

Initially, both parties extol each other's physical appearance and features. Their verbal interchanges relate almost solely to these.

This is typical of Outer Court Praise which stems largely from our physical beings. We use our natural senses and organs to initiate praise to God. We

sing and shout. We raise our hands and clap. We wave to God. We jump and shout, expressing our admiration and love in very physical terms.

b. Overcoming initial sense of unworthiness

Song 1:6

6 *Look not upon me, because I am swarthy, Because the sun hath scorched me. My mother's sons were incensed against me; They made me keeper of the vineyards; (But) mine own vineyard have I not kept.* (ASV)

The young woman spoke about herself (1:5-6) to Solomon (1:7). Her complexion had been darkened (“dark,” 1:5) from working in the hot sun (1:6). The “tents of Kedar” were made of black goat’s hair. The family background of the Shulammitte is revealed in the fact that she had two older brothers who forced her to work in their vineyard. As a result, she was unable to care for her own vineyard, a figurative reference to her own physical being. Solomon may have been on a hunting trip when he first encountered the Shulammitte, who evidently mistook him for a shepherd (1:7).

c. The King’s constant reassurance

Song 1:5

5 *Dark am I, yet lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, dark like the tents of Kedar, like the tent curtains of Solomon.* (NIV)

This verse constitutes an intimate conversation. She protests, “Please don’t look too closely at me. I am badly darkened by the sun. My complexion is spoiled.”

He responds, “yes, you are dark, but you are also truly lovely.” He did not only see what she was at that moment, he saw what she could become, with the proper treatment and in the right circumstances.

We often feel an initial unworthiness to worship God, but He lovingly reassures us with words of loving confirmation. As the relationship develops and deepens we are gradually able to receive His assurances and to see ourselves as he sees us. He sees us in Christ and to Him we are a thing of beauty.

d. His unashamed love

She initially felt unworthy of His presence and favor, but He was never ashamed of her nor embarrassed to be seen with her. She finally became convinced of this when He took her to a royal banquet and sat her beside Him at the top table, under His royal banner.

Song 2:4

4 *He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.*

(NKJ)

e. Her desire for privacy with Him

There is also an urgent desire to be alone with the object of one's affections.

Song 1:4

4 *Take me away with you-- let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers. We rejoice and delight in you; we will praise your love more than wine. How right they are to adore you!* (NIV)

f. A Sensitive and selfless approach.

The partners take nothing for granted, they woo each other continuously. Each meeting is a new love affair. The approach is gentle, considerate, and unselfish.

Song 1:2

2 *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth-- for your love is better than wine.*

A kiss is the first link in a new bonding relationship between the believer and Christ.

Ps 2:12

12 *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.* (NIV)

g. Meaningful reciprocity (mutual exchange)

Song 2:16

16 *My beloved is mine, and I am his:* (ASV)

Each partner contributes in an activity of reciprocity, each valuing the other more than themselves. It becomes a two way relationship, each giving and taking to and from the other. With each rendezvous the relationship becomes more reciprocal as each convinces the other of their love with words and deeds.

h. The lover's response

The overtures of the shepherdess soon received a positive response from the object of her love.

Her Beloved declared;

Song 1:9-10

9 *I liken you, my darling, to a mare harnessed to one of the chariots of Pharaoh.*

10 *Your cheeks are beautiful with earrings, your neck with strings of jewels.*
(NIV)

God guarantees,

Jer 29:13

13 *And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*

(NKJ)

As we seek for God through worship, He will respond to us. He will manifest His presence. Sometimes this will happen with a quiet drawing near that we sense in our inner man. At other times God will reveal His presence through some manifestation of His Spirit.

i. Mutual fulfillment

The quality of relationship is gauged by the degree of fulfillment that each partner experiences. Such a development increases the awareness of belonging each to the other. A mutual bonding transpires that accentuates each one's relationship to his partner.

Song 2:16-17

16 **My beloved is mine, and I am his:** *he feedeth among the lilies.*

17 *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.* (KJV)

j. Inspires extravagance.

Reciprocated love opens the heart to increased extravagance. The more their relationship develops, the more extravagant she becomes in her praise of her Beloved. The more she desires to give to Him of herself and her life.

Song 5:10-16

10 *My lover is radiant and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand.*

11 *His head is purest gold; his hair is wavy and black as a raven.*

12 *His eyes are like doves by the water streams, washed in milk, mounted like jewels.*

13 *His cheeks are like beds of spice yielding perfume. His lips are like lilies dripping with myrrh.*

14 *His arms are rods of gold set with chrysolite. His body is like polished ivory decorated with sapphires.*

15 *His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars.*

16 *His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my lover, this my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. (NIV)*

k. Strengthens relationship.

Each subsequent encounter further strengthens the bonding. The relationship grows by mutual trust and appreciation. The Shulamite and Shepherd pledge their love again as at the first. She pleads for a seal to be set upon their relationship so that not even death can separate them. She wants to love Him eternally.

Song 8:6-7

6 *Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame.*

7 *Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned. (NIV)*

(v. 6): Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm.

Matthew Henry says;

“She begs of him that her union with him might be confirmed, and her communion with him continued and made more intimate

(1.) "let me have a place in thy heart, an interest in thy love." This is that which all those desire above any thing that know how much their happiness is bound up in the love of Christ.

(2.) "let me never lose the room I have in thy heart; let thy love to me be ensured, as that deed which is sealed up not to be robbed. Let nothing ever prevail either to separate me from thy love, or, by suspending the communications of it, to deprive me of the comfortable sense of it."

(from Matthew Henry's Commentary)

**The presence of God
is experienced
when our spirit,
sensitized by the
Holy Spirit,
achieves a
compatibility with
God's Spirit.**

The stairway to heaven

In the realm of the spirit, there is a stairway that ascends into the very presence of God. It is like a ladder, the bottom of which is on earth, the top reaching into God's presence. There is a constant flow of traffic up and down this ladder. The ascending traffic is composed of worshipping saints, progressing step by step toward an encounter with the Lord. The descending traffic is the heavenly messengers sent to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation. (Heb 1:14) Many Christians are oblivious of this access route, it is only the true worshippers who learn how to use it to gain entrance into God's glorious presence which is heaven on earth.

An incident in the life of Jacob gives us a glimpse into the usually unseen spiritual realms.

Gen 28:11-22

11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.

12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

At the close of a tiring day, as Jacob traveled between Beersheba and Haran, he found a good place to rest for the night. With a stone for his pillow, he slept, and dreamed of a giant stairway that reached from earth to heaven. Angels constantly ascended and descended and at the top of the stairway he saw the Lord.

This is a stairway that exists in the Spirit and we need to be "in the Spirit" to discern it and to climb it. Our natural man can neither see nor ascend it. In fact, the natural man needs to be "put to sleep" that our spiritual senses may take over and open up to us those realms of the Spirit that help us to rise into the very presence of God.

He had a fresh vision of God

13 There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.

14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.

15 *I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."*

After plodding a long lonely road with little awareness of God's immediate presence, Jacob received a fresh, dynamic vision of God whilst he slept. Sometimes our natural senses are so resistant to spiritual realities, that God has to anaesthetize them in sleep and speak to our spirit in a dream.

In the dream God spoke clearly to Jacob and re-affirmed his promise of :-

a. **His Person.**

I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and of Isaac.

b. **His Promise.**

"I will give to you the land on which you are lying."

"Your descendants will be as the dust of the earth for number."

"All peoples on earth will be blessed through your descendants."

c. **His Presence.**

"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go."

d. **His Provision.**

"I will bring you back to the land I have given to you."

Jacob's remarkable realization

16 *When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it."*

17 *He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; **this is the gate of heaven.**"*

On awakening, Jacob suddenly realized that God's presence had been in that place all the time but initially, he had neither perceived nor recognized it. He had no immediate awareness of the stairway to heaven, and the proximity of God's presence and voice. He suddenly realized that the place of revelation and the Gateway to heaven is much closer than we usually realize. All that it usually takes, to experience this, is a quieting of the natural senses and a fresh sensitizing of our spiritual man. These things can be realized in moments of true worship.

Jacob's memorial

18 *Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.*

19 *He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.*
20 *Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear*
21 *so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God*

Jacob's vow

22 *and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth." (NIV)*

Preparing the way of the Lord

We must never take for granted the presence of the Lord. We must esteem and value it. We also need to prepare the way for the manifestation of His presence among us.

Exod 19:10-11

10 *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes.*
11 *"And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. (NKJ)*

Build a highway for the Lord

Ps 50:23

23 *He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way (BUILDS A HIGHWAY) so that I may show him the salvation of God." (NIV)*

David says, "Whoever offers true praise to God, glorifies the Lord and builds a highway by which God can come among us and reveal the fullness of His gracious provisions." (Paraphrase)

Isaiah also speaks of "preparing a highway for the Lord." It is a highway in the wilderness.

God dearly wants to come amongst, and visit his people. But He insists that we prove our desire for Him by preparing a highway for Him in our desert.

Isa 40:3-5

3 *A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.*

What are the materials from which the highway is built?

a. Repentance

The first imperative factor is usually repentance. That repentance may initially be from overt sins of the flesh. If these are a reality among us, they must certainly be repented of, renounced and put away. We must also vigorously repent of any previous involvement with strange spirits through association with the occult in any form.

However, the key aspect of repentance is from “dead works”, (Heb 6:1) This includes repentance from the fact that we have substituted religious programs for the true worship of God. Many church services consist of religious programs instituted by man. The liturgy is followed to the letter but little attempt is made to truly touch God’s presence with heartfelt praise and Spirit engendered worship. Man has made himself the Lord of the service, relegating the Holy Spirit to a lowly, often non existent role.

b. Removal of obstacles

In the East, in Bible times, it was the custom to send a party of men, before a king or prince, to prepare the way for him. They cleared the way of thorns, brambles, rocks, and other potential impediments. They smoothed out the road, found fording places through rivers, and generally prepared a highway through the wilderness.

In the life of a church, many obstacles may accrue that hinder the moving and freedom of the Spirit. These obstacles may be religious traditions, wrong attitudes, resistance against the Spirit, lack of unity, and many other obstacles. All these impediments must be removed from the pathway, through repentance and renunciation.

c. Deep Desire

God only responds to deep, earnest desire. He says, “I will be found of those who seek me earnestly and diligently.”

David crystallized His desire for God:-

Ps 27:4

4 **One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple. (NKJ)**

Ps 27:8

8 *My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek. (NIV)*

God will rarely ever visit a people in blessing who are not seeking His face and expressing to Him the longing of their heart.

d. Faith

We need more than desire when we seek God's face, we must also see Him in faith. Don't seek Him unless you truly believe that He will respond. Seek Him diligently, in active faith, fully expecting Him to answer.

e. Submission to the Spirit

Once the Holy begins to respond to your prayers and faith, submit immediately to His prompting. Let Him assume leadership and authority over the gathering.

In the words of Mary, "Whatever He says to you, do it." The Holy Spirit will **TURN OUR WATER INTO WINE!** (John 2:1-11)

He will turn our mourning into dancing. Ps 30:11-12

11 *You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,*

12 *To the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever. (NKJ)*

When the Holy Spirit is truly made Lord of our gathering, He will begin to transform us.

2 Cor 3:17-18

17 *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.*

18 *And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (NIV)*

f. God's glory will be revealed

4 *Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.*

5 **And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it.**

g. God will speak to us powerfully

For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." (NIV)

Our wilderness will become a fruitful garden

Isa 35:1-8

1 *The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;*

2 *It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the excellency of our God.*

The wilderness, which is a wasteland, (barren and unfruitful) will become a scene of rejoicing, gladness and fruitfulness. Even the desert will blossom like a rose. Only those who have seen the Judean wilderness, after the Spring rains will fully understand this.

Prior to the rains, the desert is barren, there is no growth of any kind. Not a blade of grass, nor a wild flower to be seen. It is a dry, sandy, rocky wilderness. But once the rain comes, it is immediately transformed. Suddenly wild flowers of every hue, transform the desert into a carpet of color. The transformation is astounding. One could not have believed that the wilderness was capable of producing such a riot of color and beauty.

Likewise, when the rain of God's Spirit falls on the barrenness of our lives, they are transformed beyond recognition. The transformation is accomplished by the introduction of gladness and rejoicing.

People are strengthened by the Joy of the Lord

3 Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.

When even weak hands are raised to God in worship, they become strong. Feeble knees stop knocking together and are made firm. The Joy of the Lord banishes weakness and fills the recipients with Divine strength.

Neh 8:10-12

10 *Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. **Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.**"*

11 *The Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for this is a sacred day. Do not grieve."*

12 *Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and **to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.** (NIV)*

Fearful hearts receive confidence

4 Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; he will come and save you."

Blind eyes and deaf ears receive revelation

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Let us understand this promise spiritually in the first place. Spiritual eyes that have never seen God's glory will "see the glory of the Lord."

Spiritually deaf ears that have never heard the voice of God, will hear its sweet tones.

The lame will leap like deer

6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

People who have always been staid and conservative, who would never dream of jumping or shouting, will literally leap for joy when God's presence overflows their hearts. The Joy of the Lord is greater than any earthly joy. It can cause a response that no other pleasure can cause. When this kind of joy begins to flow, don't quench it. Respond positively. Enter into it. Enjoy it. This joy will transform you.

Parched ground will become pools of water

7 The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of jackals, where each lay, there shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

Parched ground can never become fruitful. Though it may be potentially fertile, rich in trace elements and growth potential, until it receives water, it will never bear fruit. But when the rain of God's Spirit comes, even the desert will bear fruit.

God's Highway will be established

8 A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray. (NKJ)

Church Planting International

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Once God's Highway is established, He will be able to visit us again and again. The territory need never again revert to desert and wilderness. While the highway remains open, God will delight to use it. He will come like refreshing rain.

What is Atmosphere?

Atmosphere is the pervading mood or feeling in a given place. It is created by the spiritual emanations (atmospherics) present. Our ability to discern and feel these, are inherent in our spiritual being and emotions. Spiritual atmosphere occurs when our spirit encounters the Spirit of God.

Atmosphere is intangible

Atmosphere cannot be perceived by sight or touch. It is ethereal or spiritual in nature. It is spiritually discerned (sensed) through our spiritual antennas. The felt presence of God is conveyed in a spiritual atmosphere. Most often you can neither see nor touch it, but you can feel and sense it. To do so you must have the right attitude and spiritual sensitivity.

Atmosphere is inevitable

Atmosphere is present everywhere. In some places it is more evident than in others. Some places have little atmosphere. Others have a powerful atmosphere. Some atmospheres are extremely negative. Others are dynamically positive. Every place gives off some kind of impression through its character. Atmosphere is created largely by the furnishings, items and people assembled in a given place.

Atmosphere is legitimate

Many Christians are nervous of the idea of having an atmosphere. They mistakenly believe that it is pure emotion, of the flesh, and something to be heartily discouraged. The presence of an important person inevitably creates an atmosphere of reverence and awe. How much more ought God's presence to create a distinctive and awesome atmosphere.

There was obviously an awesome atmosphere at the dedication of Solomon's temple when God's manifest presence invaded that place.

2 Chr 7:1-3

*1 When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory (**presence**) of the LORD filled the temple.*

*2 The priests could not enter the temple of the LORD because the glory(**presence**) of the LORD filled it.*

3 When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the

ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever."
 (NIV)

Every person projects an atmosphere

Every person has a unique aura that flows from their inner attitude. This creates an atmosphere which they project wherever they go. Depending on their personality and character, plus their spiritual development and maturity, (or lack thereof) they may exude any one of a number of kinds of atmospheres. E.g.

Positive	Negative
Optimistic	Pessimistic
Inspirational	Discouraging
Radiating light	Dispensing darkness
Happy	Gloomy

Personal atmosphere

a. Begins in our thought life

“For, as a man thinks in his heart, so he becomes.” Prov 23:7.
 You become what you think you are.
 You become what you think about.

b. Accentuated through our words

“For out of the abundance (fullness) of his heart, a man speaks.”
 Whatever fills your mind and thought life, that is what you will talk about.
 Whatever you talk about you will project. It will create an atmosphere within and around you.

Negative thoughts and words will create a negative atmosphere.
 Positive thoughts and words will create a positive atmosphere.
 Critical thoughts and words will create a critical atmosphere. Etc.

Your words will convince you. You will be what you say.

c. Inner attitudes create outer atmosphere

Whatever people carry within them they inevitably discharge into the atmosphere around them. Their inner attitudes create an aura that infiltrates

their surroundings. Other people are made aware of it. They sense and feel it. If a number of people get together and begin to express their attitudes through speech or emotional emanation, they create solid mutual atmosphere which can be extremely powerful. If it happens to be a church in which they gather, they create a wrong atmosphere there. Which is why the Psalmist said, *“Enter His gates with thanksgiving. Come into his presence with singing.”* This is the correct attitude to exude when we come before God.

Your home has an atmosphere

Every home has an atmosphere of its own. It is often evident from the moment one enters it. The manner in which a house is furnished creates an atmosphere. Whether the place is tidy or untidy helps to determine the atmosphere. The people (family?) in that home, powerfully affect it's atmosphere. If they are warm, relaxed and friendly, visitors may feel immediately at home. If their welcome is not so evident, visitors can hardly wait to get out again.

Many years ago, in Brisbane, Australia, I was asked to visit a family who were experiencing great trials and difficulties. This family consisted of the mother and five children all of whom were in a constant state of ill health. The children's performance at school was inexplicably poor and there seemed to be a financial curse on their family.

As I sat and conversed with the mother, a conviction deepened inside me that there was something badly wrong with the atmosphere of their house. After a brief prayer I asked if anything dramatic and sad had ever happened in their house. It transpired that the deceased father and his brother had actually built the house. They were not registered builders yet evidently knew enough about building to erect this place in their spare time from items they had purchased cheaply from various sources.

The task had been an onerous and demanding one. Arguments and rows had punctuated the building process. Great stress was on everyone involved, including financial indebtedness to the Bank. Ultimately the stress was too great for the father who hung himself in the attic, casting a shadow of grief and despair on the whole family.

I explained to the mother that the fighting, distress and ultimate suicide had been aggravated by familiar spirits that had plagued her husband's family for some years. I strongly urged she and the children to make a sincere commitment to Christ and place themselves under His protection. I further encouraged them to trust Jesus Christ to cleanse their house of every negative, destructive spirit that resided there.

We subsequently marched through the house from room to room, singing and praying and commanding every evil spirit to leave. By the time we concluded our march every family member could sense the difference in the atmosphere. Even the rooms seemed brighter, the atmosphere was lighter, the heaviness of depression was gone. Within a few weeks their fortunes had obviously changed. The children's health and schooling improved remarkably. The atmosphere in the home and in the family members was dramatically transformed. Everyone who visited that home was immediately aware of it. The bad atmosphere had gone and a much healthier, happier one filled the place.

Your church building has an atmosphere

Every church building has a unique atmosphere that can usually be discerned and recognized as soon as one enters. Often the age and architecture of the building greatly affects the feeling one discerns. The style and condition of the building influences the ambience some degree. The manner in which the place is decorated and furnished also has some effect. Unfortunately many architects have felt that a church building should reflect quiet solemnity, severity and gloominess which is actually a complete contrast to the Biblical image, e.g.

Ps 100:1-5

- 1 ***Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.***
 - 2 ***Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.***
 - 3 *Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*
 - 4 ***Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.***
 - 5 *For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.*
- (NIV)

Some congregations deliberately strive for a solemn and somber atmosphere, believing this to be appropriately "sacred". They also encourage conservative and restrained behavior in what they imagine is "The house of God". What they actually produce is an old fashioned image of religious legalism and self righteousness that has little or no appeal to non-Christians. Nor does it encourage the Christians to enjoy and express any degree of freedom or joy.

I mentioned previously that when people come together they sub-consciously create a predominant atmosphere. If it is a wrong attitude and atmosphere, it is highly unlikely that the participants will experience God's presence.

Begin with the right attitude

I remember many years ago, preaching in a church in Britain. It was a bitterly cold winter's evening and the heating system in the building was not working. About three hundred people had gathered and their predominant thought was not on worship, but on how cold it was.

The service began with a hymn that ought to have been a rousing and inspiring one. Unfortunately the congregation's attitude was a disgruntled one rather than a triumphant one. This was reflected in their singing, which was like a funeral dirge. Suddenly, the Pastor who was attempting to lead their worship, cried "Stop". He then began to rebuke the people for their lack of enthusiasm and to tell them they had come before God with the wrong attitude and spirit. He reminded them that the Bible says, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and come into His courts with praise."

To my surprise, he ordered the people to leave the building and re-enter with the right spirit. Initially they thought he was not serious, but it soon became clear that he was! With a good deal of grumbling the congregation filed out into the night air which was even colder than the atmosphere inside the building. They stood, like a herd of sheep, on the side walk while the Pastor exhorted them to come back inside with the right attitude. He stationed he and myself on either side of the entrance with instructions to only allow in those who were expressing thanks and praise to God.

Slowly they began to file back in. This time they were speaking out words of thanksgiving. To the credit of that congregation, every member eventually came back in. What a meeting we had! The praise and worship erupted into a glorious awareness of God's presence and ultimately all kinds of wonders and miracles took place.

His method was probably rather drastic, but his intention was good and the result proved that it was also right.

**The atmosphere of religious
restraint
in many churches
kills the true spirit of Christianity
that Jesus defined as**

“Abundant Life and Fullness of Joy”.

(John 10:10; 15:11)

What creates a spiritual atmosphere?

Atmospherics are the elements that create an atmosphere. A spiritual atmosphere is created when our spirit touches the Spirit of God. The emanations that are generated form the atmosphere of spiritual climate. There are certain spiritual atmospherics such as;

The presence of the Holy Spirit

This is undoubtedly the first, and indispensable factor. Without the Holy Spirit, there will not be any legitimate spiritual atmosphere. It is uniquely His presence that creates the atmosphere in which the presence of God may be experienced.

Recognizing and Honoring the Holy Spirit

However, it is not sufficient to believe that He is present, we must also discern and honor His presence.

The good news is that He is always present wherever believers are gathered in Jesus' name.

The sad news is that those believers are often too absorbed in their own program and activities that they virtually ignore His presence.

To experience an atmosphere conducive to a miracle, we must recognize and honor the presence of the Spirit amongst us. We do this by being sensitive and obedient to His voice.

Come with the right attitude

Ps 100:4

4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, And into his courts with praise: (tehillah; a hymn of praise) Give thanks unto him, and bless his name. (ASV)

- a. Enter His gates with thanksgiving.
- b. Come into His courts with songs of praise

c. Bless (honor, exalt, uplift, magnify) God's Holy Name through worship.

I will enter His gates with thanksgiving in my heart
I will enter his courts with praise.
I will say this is the day that the Lord has made
I will rejoice for He has made me glad.
He has made me glad, He has made me glad
I will rejoice for He has made me glad.

True reverence is responding obediently to God's Spirit

Too many churches believe that reverence of God's presence requires solemnity, silence, gravity and formality. They ignore the plain words of Scripture

2 Cor 3:17-18

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (NKJ)

Positive response

The right atmosphere begins to develop when we respond positively to the presence of the Spirit among us. Paul says (above) that the Spirit is the rightful Lord of our gatherings and that His presence releases spiritual liberty. When we honor Him as Lord of our gathering He invests the event with His liberating spirit.

Our attitude must be firstly to genuinely invoke and invite the Holy Spirit to be the Lord of our gathering. Having done this we should then sensitively discern what He wishes to do among us. We need to humbly make contact with the Holy Spirit, recognizing from the outset that He is the true Lord of our worship service. Having recognized and contacted His presence we then need to discern and follow the flow of His leading.

Prayerful intercession

Public prayer is too often a formality, a prescribed part of the liturgy, rather than a genuine cry to God. The Holy Spirit will only respond to a genuine invitation that springs from the heart and includes a willingness to honor His presence and obey His voice.

Music

When we truly offer praise to God, we honor Him and prepare a way (build a highway in the spirit) by which He may enter our presence and reveal His saving grace.

Ps 50:23

23 He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God." (NIV)

What is the real objective of our musical expression? What are we truly endeavoring to achieve through our music? Are we merely following a traditionally prescribed routine, or are we genuinely seeking to provide a grand entrance for the Lord the Spirit?

Spiritual Worship

Genuine spiritual worship must be offered ***“in the spirit”*** and according to God’s truth.

John 4:23-24

23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." (NIV)

Much of our corporate worship is presented to God through the medium of music, but it must be more than the mere performance of music. Worship is a path we may walk into the presence of God. The music to which we march, is a means to that end and not the end in itself.

The high praises of God

Ps 149:6

6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, (NKJ)

The high praises of God are the praises that surround the throne of God in heaven. Various glorious living creatures encompass God’s throne, continuously singing and speaking anthems of praise to God and His glory. They create a dynamic atmosphere of joyful and triumphant worship in which God dwells.

Ps 22:3

3 But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel. (NKJ)

As the Holy spirit refines and enhances our worship, it becomes compatible with the heavenly praises on high. When this happens we begin to feel the aura of God's presence among us.

Sing to the well

Num 21:16-17

16 *From there they went to Beer, which is the well where the LORD said to Moses, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water."*

17 *Then Israel sang this song: "Spring up, O well! All of you sing to it-- (NKJ)*

Israel were travelling through a wilderness, but God, in His mercy brought them to a place where arterial water was available. At Moses' command, Israel's leaders dug the well, while the whole congregation of Israel "sang unto the well".

Our spiritual life may become like a wilderness at times, dry and barren. But God has His wells of refreshing. We must sing to those wells until they begin to burst forth with the living water of God's presence. Like Israel, we must do it in unison. God instructed Moses, "Gather the people *together* and have them all sing to the well".

There is a well in the midst of every congregation but the leaders must dig and the congregation must sing together to release its streams of living water. It is a well of life, a well of rejoicing, a well of refreshing and a well that will water the land and produce fruitfulness.

Despising worship produces barrenness

David's wife Michal is a clear example of this.

2 Sam 6:20-23

20 *Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, "How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!"*

21 *So David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me instead of your father and all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel. Therefore I will play music before the LORD.*

22 *"And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight. But as for the maidservants of whom you have spoken, by them I will be held in honor."*

23 *Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.*

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Her overt criticism of David's enthusiastic worship, left him unmoved. He refused to conform his worship style to the perceptions of a carnal, conservative woman who was embarrassed to be associated with uninhibited worship. David insisted that his purpose was to please God, not man and that if uninhibited worship appeared unseemly to a carnal mind, he would continue to do it nevertheless. As for Michal, her attitude ensured that she remained barren until the end of her days.

What are the miracles?

Encountering God's presence in a personal and intimate manner

The miracle of our ability to sense and experience the personal presence of Christ amongst us.

Once this happens, any number of wonderful miracles may transpire.

The mystical miracle power of Christ releases a potential for all manner of wonders.

Miracles of revelation, encouragement, healing, and restoration

The miracle of conversion and transformation can happen.

The breaking of bondages and a release of one's spirit from imprisonment.

The miracle of experiencing God's love

Many people find it difficult to fully accept the fact of God's love for them. They often feel unworthy of such love and cannot believe that God really loves THEM so much.

In the Song of Solomon, the shepherdess is initially self conscious, shy and inhibited. She protests her unworthiness of his attention.

Song 1:6

6 Do not look upon me, because I am dark, because the sun has tanned me. (NKJ)

As their relationship develops and deepens, He constantly assures her of His love and admiration for her, speaking of the beauty He sees in her. Basking in the attention of His love for her, she begins to see herself as He sees her. She is encouraged to lose those inhibitions.

The miracle of receiving His pardon

We really need to experience the wonder of God's loving presence in order to truly know His pardon in an experiential manner. The more we experience His presence, the more we sub-consciously know that we are truly forgiven pardoned, freely accepted and restored.

The Prodigal Son, could not believe that His father could ever restore him to the favor and privilege of sonship. He rehearsed all manner of possible scenarios, the best of which was that he might become a hired servant of his

father's. But the loving father brushed aside all his protestations and generously poured the full quota of his love upon him. He fully and completely restored him to his original position of privilege. He generously killed the fatted calf, threw a huge party, put shoes on his feet and placed a ring on his finger.

The miracle of seeing His power and glory

Ps 63:2

2 I have seen you in the sanctuary (the place of worship) and beheld your power and your glory. (NIV)

It is also in the place of worship that we are able to behold and gaze upon the beauty of the Lord.

Ps 27:4

4 One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple. (NKJ)

The miracle of experiencing the Joy of the Lord

Ps 21:6

6 Surely you have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence. (NIV)

Ps 27:6

at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD. (NIV)

Ps 16:11

11 You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (NKJ)

Neh 8:10

This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. (NIV)

The Bible is filled with references that link joy to the presence of the Lord. During the feast of Tabernacles God commanded His people to "Rejoice for seven days before the Lord". God loves to witness our supreme joy in His presence. In fact, He has promised to augment it.

Zeph 3:17

17 *The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.*" (NIV)

Elisha's experience

II Ki 3:15-16

15 *But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon Elisha.*

16 *And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches. (KJV)*

Confronted with the need to bring a prophetic word from God, Elisha immediately called for a musician. Whilst the harpist played, the hand (Spirit) of the Lord came upon Elisha and he was inspired with a word from God. Obviously the atmosphere fostered by the music helped to create the right atmosphere to release a genuine prophetic word from God. The anointed atmosphere helped to produce a spiritual miracle.

Paul's experience

Acts 14:7-10

7 *And they were preaching the gospel there.*

8 *And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked.*

9 *This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed,*

10 *said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked.*

It seems apparent, from the context of this incident, that the presentation of the Gospel by this group of missionaries, created an exciting and stimulating atmosphere. Whole cities were both stirred and divided by this phenomena. In Lystra the gathering produced an atmosphere of exciting faith conducive to the performance of miracles. The preaching of Paul created a spirit of faith and expectancy among his listeners. As Paul observed one particular man in the crowd, he could clearly see that the spirit of faith had gripped him. This encouraged Paul to shout with a loud voice *"Stand up on your feet"*. The man immediately leapt to his feet and walked. Imagine the great excitement that accompanied this mighty miracle!

The power of music

Music has always played an important role in the worship of God. Way back, in the very dawn of creation, "...the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7).

This scripture refers to a pre-history occasion. It alludes to an earliest era of the dateless past when God first created the universe. It is the oldest historic reference to music and singing. Several things emerge from it.

Music was conceived in the heart of God

- Music existed before the foundation of the universe.
- It was used by the "sons of God."
- It was employed in the praise of God.
- It was expressed with joyful enthusiasm.

In its simplest forms music may be defined as an art form consisting of sequences of sound, organized methodically, harmoniously, and rhythmically. Such sounds are usually produced by musical instruments, human voices, or both, separately or together.

- Music is a gift of God to mankind.
- It is an expression of God's essential being.
- It is the language of the soul, expressing its highest aspirations.
- It facilitates a more intense feeling than spoken words.
- It has uplifting and healing powers.
- Good music directs one's thoughts to God.

The earliest Hebraic music was predominantly vocal. There were very few instruments in the earliest days of their history. The human voice was the most accessible and popular instrument with which to make music. However, biblical references to later periods include mention of many forms of musical instruments.

Music creates an atmosphere

All music creates its own atmosphere. Marketing strategists have understood this. Service industries have too. Restaurants play music conducive to relaxing and eating. Congregational attitudes are influenced by the type and tempo of music and by the lyrics.

“Spirituals” were birthed by slaves in the cotton fields of the southern states of the USA. They sang to alleviate their indignities and suffering. They sang to create an atmosphere of hopeful anticipation in the midst of their trials, to bring God’s encouragement to their hearts.

God’s people used it to create certain atmospheres

Worship in song is mentioned in Exodus 15:1. Moses and the children of Israel sang unto the Lord; V2, Miriam and all the women, with tambourines and dances, responded to the song of Moses. Moses and Miriam created an atmosphere of victory and triumph to minister encouragement to the bewildered Israelites.

1 Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: "I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea.

2 The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. (NIV)

The digging of the well at Beer was celebrated with singing

Num 21:17-18

17 Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it:

18 The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves. And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah: (KJV)

Deborah and Barak celebrated their victory in song (Judges 5:1-31).

The women of Israel celebrated David's victory over Goliath in song.

(1 Sam 18:6,7).

4,000 Levites praised the Lord with instruments (1 Chron 23:5), when Solomon was made king over Israel.

"The children of Israel.....kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord" (II Chron 30:21).

"And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of music, Psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy" (1 Chron 15:16).

Imagine the high drama and joyful release of witnessing 4,000 singers and musicians playing loudly and singing enthusiastically to God. What a glorious occasion that was!

Music inspires prophetic utterance.

1 Sam 10:5

5 *"After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying.*

It is clear that music and singing are vitally integral to the praise and worship of God. This is portrayed all through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Music is also associated frequently with the release of spiritual gifts such as prophecy. The group of prophets employed a wide variety of musical instruments as they prophesied. Both music and prophecy create a sense of God's presence.

A great variety of instruments were used

The scriptures reveal that a great variety of musical instruments were used in Davidic praise. Psalm 150 lists all the basic families of instruments found in the modern orchestra.

Ps 150:1-6

1 *Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.*
2 *Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.*
3 *Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, (brass) praise him with the harp and lyre, (strings)*
4 *praise him with tambourine (percussion) and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, (woodwind)*
5 *praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.*
6 *Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD. (NIV)*

It seems obvious, from such references, that music offered to God in the Old Testament, was neither sterile nor conservative. There is very obvious spontaneity, passion, life, color and movement that identifies biblical music. Biblical worship often attracted the criticism of conservative minds that were more concerned with maintaining outward dignity, than with expressing enthusiasm.

The idea taught in many churches, that the
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*****s and various kinds of shakers are the oldest and were frequently used to accompany songs and dances of praise.

Wind instruments included trumpets, and the shofar (rams horn)

Amongst the variety of stringed instruments were the harp and lyre. Several lyres were often used together in a string ensemble to accompany the singing of a choir. People who object to the employment of guitars in worship should realize that the harp and lyre which were inevitably used to accompany biblical worship, are the ancient equivalent of the modern guitar.

Musical accompaniment in the bible, employing a wide and colorful variety of instruments, must have been very dramatic and exciting.

2 Chr 5:12-14

12 All the Levites who were musicians-- Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives-- stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets.

13 The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: "He is good; his love endures forever." Then the temple of the LORD was filled with a cloud,

14 and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God. (NIV)

Numerous and varied styles of music were used too which should encourage us to realize that God does not share the narrow views of many Christians as to which instruments may be unsuitable for worship.

Many national churches have been robbed of authentic cultural expression in music and worship by a narrow view, frequently espoused by Western missionaries and church leaders, about the suitability or otherwise of historic, ethnic instruments.

Congregational Worship

The impact and effectiveness of good praise and worship, in a congregational setting, can scarcely be exaggerated. This is a fact I have noticed so many times. Most successful churches I have observed, have had the help of a good worship program. Most churches that have experienced dynamic growth, have also featured good congregational worship. There are factors involved in effective praise and worship that are powerfully conducive to the atmosphere that wins the day.

What is the objective of a worship service?

If the average Christian were asked this question, what might their response be?

- A worship service is where the members gather together to worship God.
- A worship service is a gathering of the members to hear the Word of God.
- A worship service is where Christians gather to sing hymns and songs.

Responses like these would be partially correct, but not wholly so. These concepts fall short of the ideal result of a church worship service.

Congregational worship.

True congregational praise and worship occurs when a gathered group of God's people join harmoniously to exalt God corporately in music and song. Such worship originates in heaven.

Job 38:4-7

4 *"Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand.*

5 *Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?*

6 *On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone--*

7 **while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?**

(NIV)

It was an integral feature of the New Testament church that even a prison sentence could not stifle. God shouted a responsive Hallelujah so loudly that the prison walls fell down!

Acts 16:25-26

25 *About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.*

26 *Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.*

(NIV)

It will also feature strongly in heaven throughout eternity. Rev 19:6-7

6 *Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.*

7 *Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.* (NIV)

True Corporate worship unites a congregation

Ps 133:1-3

1 *How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!*

2 *It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes.*

3 *It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.* (NIV)

Dwelling, living, flowing in unity attracts the anointing of God in a powerful way. True corporate worship is one of the ways in which the Spirit of God tunes a congregation and brings it into the unity of the Spirit. As a congregation yield themselves to attaining united expressions of worship, God blends their spirits together in harmonious unity.

Music attracts the presence of God

II Ki 3:14-18

14 *Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, if I did not have respect for the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you or even notice you.*

15 ***But now bring me a harpist. " While the harpist was playing, the hand of the LORD came upon Elisha***

16 and he said, "This is what the LORD says: Make this valley full of ditches.

17 For this is what the LORD says: You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink.

18 This is an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD; he will also hand Moab over to you. (NIV)

When Elisha the prophet urgently needed a word from God, he summoned a musician. Even while the harpist played, the Spirit of God came upon Elisha and he prophesied what Israel must do. Music produces an atmosphere conducive to spiritual manifestations that indicate the presence of God. Spiritual music can invite God's presence in a tangible, discernible manner. A dynamic spiritual atmosphere is often created by a congregation harmonizing with each other and with God's Spirit.

A group of Spirit filled musicians, with instruments and voices lifted in praise can be a dynamic and powerful attraction in a church. Every church leader should give high priority to forming such a team.

It is exciting to realize that God loves music. Whenever His people delight themselves in music, song and dance, God loves to join in with them.

Music inspires and stimulates people

There is a rousing and stimulating element in stirring music that unites and activates any body of people. Who has never been aroused by a military band? The army of the Lord marches best to the strains of triumphant music that stirs the inner passions of a redeemed heart. The music of the church, marching triumphantly towards the future manifestation of God's kingdom reign, should be the finest in the world.

Unfortunately the church at large has frequently allowed itself to believe that sacred (holy) music must be staid, conservative and old fashioned. This is not true. Kingdom music, inspired in heaven, should be the most dynamic and appealing ever heard. It should be so unique and inspirational that people would travel miles to hear and participate in it.

Triumphant music lifts morale.

Morale is mutual, and united confidence. Its is "esprit de corps", the united, optimistic, triumphant spirit of a body of people amalgamated by the same aims and objectives. It is the high degree of optimism and confidence that fills the heart of a united and committed company of people.

Stirring music is a main contributor to high morale. It inspires people and brings out the best in them. It unites them as one person. Which is why John says:

Rev 19:6-7

6 *And I heard, as it were, the voice (singular) of a great multitude, (plural) as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!*

7 *"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." (NKJ)*

The army that was led by a choir.

2 Chr 20:20-22

Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper."

21 *And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: "Praise the LORD, for His mercy endures forever."*

22 *Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated. (NKJ)*

Israel's army was outnumbered and facing possible defeat, except that God had promised them victory. 2 Chr 20:17

17 *You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you."*

(NIV)

God did not encourage them to rely on their numbers, or weapons, but on His Word, to which the Levites responded with great shouts of praise.

2 Chr 20:19

19 *Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites **stood up and praised the LORD, the God of Israel, with very loud voice.** (NIV)*

God sent them into battle with a choir before them, exalting the Lord in their praises and magnifying His grace. As they sang God set ambushments against their enemies completely conquering their adversaries.

The lone Piper

One of my friends of some years ago, won the Victoria Cross for outstanding bravery under enemy attack. The incident occurred in World War II, when he

was a piper in a Scottish regiment. His platoon was under heavy attack and suffering massive casualties. Communications were poor, his unit was in disarray, making a disorderly retreat under withering enemy fire.

Bill soon realized that their confused retreat was making he and his mates an easier target for the enemy and that if something were not done quickly they would soon be decimated. Being a earnest Christian, he immediately committed the situation to God in prayer. Throwing down his rifle, he grabbed his bag pipes and began to play a stirring Scottish tune. Immediately his associates slowed down their retreat.

Encouraged by his own music, Bill began to march towards the enemy. His comrades, witnessing his bravery, began to sing and shout loudly and joined him as he walked resolutely towards the enemy troops. Fresh morale surged through his unit as a sense of patriotism and bravery inspired them all. Though Bill was wounded, he continued to advance and the whole unit took fresh courage, surging past him, into the teeth of their foe with guns blazing. The tide was soon turned under their counter attack, and before long the enemy were in retreat and the Scottish troops had won the day.

In subsequent dispatches, his bravery under fire despite sustaining two bullet wounds, was recognized as the factor that changed the fate of his unit. His associates spoke of the surge of morale that swept their ranks as the skirl of the bag pipes sounded forth. Without considering their own safety they joined their brave comrade, routing the opposition and winning a strategic victory that ultimately saved their lives. The whole regiment was later honored when Bill was invested with the V.C. by his king.

That incident frequently reminds me of spiritual warfare. Often, when the enemy appears to be gaining the upper hand, voices lifted in praise to God have turned the tide from imminent defeat to resounding victory. In a similar manner, dynamic music expressing praise to God, has frequently inspired God's army to march forward to victory.

The power of music's attraction

Rousing music has a universal appeal. It stirs something within every human spirit. It awakens dormant faith and positively inspires the inner man. Other people love to join an enthusiastic congregation. There is a special sense of belonging amongst people who lift their voices together in jubilant song. Good, spirited, triumphant music and song is an extremely positive and attracting force. It makes people want to be part of that crowd.

What kind of instruments?

The question often arises, “What is the best type of instrument to use for praise and worship?”

Obviously there are numerous factors involved in answering this question. Some of those factors might be :-

1. The ethnic identity of the church.
2. The size of the congregation and venue.
3. The kind of instruments available.
4. The style of worship desired.

However, there are several issues that need to be considered in making this important decision.

Accompaniment

This is the most important aspect, the need to provide basic accompaniment for the congregants. The obvious instruments for this are simple accompaniment instruments such as a piano, electronic keyboard, or guitar, all of which are suitable to provide the simple basics of music, i.e. melody, harmony and rhythm. In a very real sense these are the lead instruments and one should try to ensure that the players are competent and capable.

An electronic keyboard is very desirable because it is capable of producing such a wide variety of musical effects and is extremely versatile.

Rhythm section.

This usually consists of drums, and other forms of percussion instruments, plus bass instrument. The skill and maturity of the rhythm musicians is extremely important. They frequently dictate the tempo of the worship. Drums are a particularly powerful music medium with a very strong influence and should be carefully utilized. They can almost “make or break” the quality of worship.

An ideal small music group

In a relatively small situation a piano, or electronic keyboard, guitar, bass and drums will constitute a very adequate music group. Modern electric key boards, particularly a MIDI board may be ideal because they can simulate a whole orchestra if necessary.

Augmentation.

In a larger setting it is often desirable to augment the basic instruments with other suitable ones. Violins, flutes, or other single note instruments can add great to the effectiveness and beauty of worship, setting very powerful moods. Almost any instruments, properly and appropriately used, can enhance a worship service.

Suitable music team members.

A worship team must be prayerfully and carefully put together. Adding the wrong persons can spell disaster. Each member should be carefully examined using the following criteria.

1. Spiritual maturity.

This qualification covers a wide spectrum and is by far the most important factor.

Spiritual sensitivity and discernment, with an eagerness to flow with God's Spirit, is even more important than technical skills.

2. Musical ability and skill.

Obviously this is also very important. Yet this is an area in which people can frequently achieve a greater degree of competence. In other words, if you have someone who meets all the other criteria, they can usually improve and enhance their musical skills.

3. Commitment.

Every team member must be willing to commit themselves to every requirement that will ensure the effectiveness of the team. This obviously includes attending all rehearsals, keeping in practice, and being present for every event to which the team is committed.

4. Loyalty.

The harmony and unity of the worship team must have the highest priority and to achieve this every member must exercise and maintain loyalty to the pastor, leader, and every fellow member of the team.

5. Compatibility.

Musicians are often uniquely individualistic, artistic, creative and sometimes temperamental. It is essential that they are also compatible, willing and able to fit into and flow together with the team. There must be no petty jealousy or competition among them. Every individual talent must be brought into subjection to God and to the spirit of the team. Team spirit is essential.

6. Unity of the Spirit.

Eph 4:2-3

2 *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

3 *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.* (NIV)

The musicians and singers must be in spiritual unity, with the Holy Spirit and with one another. It takes regular prayer, spiritual adjustments, and corporate worship together to achieve and maintain this.

7. Corporate anointing and flow.

The music team must enjoy and move in a mutual anointing. They must learn to listen to the gentle voice of the Spirit and be aware of how the Spirit is moving on other members of the team. They must learn to flow together in the anointing of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit can also use music for the glory of God and edification of people.

Notice the powerful therapeutic effect that anointed music had on Saul. (1 Sam 16:23). David had been anointed by God (V 13). He was a skillful musician, a gifted composer and a sweet singer. When he played and sang under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the evil spirit departed from Saul. He was refreshed. He was well.

Music expresses the joy of liberty

It was only when Israel was in captivity in Babylon that they ceased to sing and play. Their anointed music ceased and they hung their harps on the willow trees (Psalm 137).

When their Babylon captors goaded them to sing, they replied, "*How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?*"

When their captivity ceased, after 70 years, they returned home with joyful singing and laughter. There was praise on their lips (Psa 126:1,2). It is only when the Church is in spiritual captivity that her anointed music ceases. When that captivity is broken and the people

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*****ts 16:25).

3. **The Apostle Paul instructs the church in anointed singing.** (Eph 5:19)
4. **The book of Revelation is interspersed with mass choirs singing mighty anthems of praise.**

Christians are exhorted (Ephesians 5:19; Col 3:16) to sing:-

- a. **PSALMS.** The biblical psalms set to music.
- b. **HYMNS.** Anthems of praise to God.
- c. **SPIRITUAL SONGS.** Spontaneous songs given by the Spirit. The songs of the primitive church were praises to the Lord. Their primary objective in singing was to praise and magnify God. They did not sing for effect, or to entertain. Their singing was not man-centered. It was directed to God for His pleasure alone.

Music can be used to teach God's Word

Col 3:16-17

16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

17 *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (NIV)*

Worship promotes unity in a congregation

Worshipping together in music and song encourages and promotes a certain measure of spiritual unity. This is especially true when a congregation is truly *worshipping in the Spirit*. Unity with God (perpendicular) and with each other, (horizontal) is greatly strengthened by playing and singing in harmony together. The Holy Spirit is able to tune our hearts as one when we recognize Him as our heavenly choir director and follow His leading. Congregational "singing in the Spirit" can be particularly effective, when the Holy Spirit wants to tune the hearts of the people.

Bondage and depression can be banished by music

1 Sam 16:23

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23 Whenever the evil spirit came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.

This type of anointed singing and music, directed to God in praise and worship, is very rare in the church today. But God is restoring this ministry to His people. Here are some suggestions to help you bring your community into a ministry of anointed music in praise to God.

Leading a Worship Service

Congregational worship is an extremely important element of the New Testament Church. A primary calling of New Testament Christians is the worship of God.

1 Pet 2:9

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (NIV)

We are a “Kingdom of Priests” to offer continual praise to God. Our ministry has already commenced and it will continue throughout God’s eternal reign over this universe.

It is obvious from the Psalms that choir leaders or music directors held an important and respected place within the worshipping community. His designation as choir director suggests that he leads the congregation as one would direct a choir, encouraging and bringing out subtle harmonies and sounds that express the unity and oneness of the people.

Many of the psalms were addressed to “The chief musician. A Psalm of David”, suggesting that the lyrics that King David composed were passed on to the chief musician for his assessment and assistance with regard to the music and its treatment.

The Hebrew word for choir director suggests several ideas including a “master of ceremonies”. The role of a master of ceremonies is to arrange, organize and direct a particular event, at which task he is a “master”. Surely this should be the aim of a worship director or leader, to make our occasions of praise a triumphant success to the glory of God.

Three dimensional worship

The number 3, has considerable significance in respect of worship. God required the Israelites to appear before Him in festivals of worship, three times each year.

Exod 34:23-24

23 *"Three times in the year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the LORD God of Israel.*

24 *"For I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year. (NKJ)*

The three occasions were at the Feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles.

The number three also suggests numerous others important matters concerning Praise and Worship in the biblical context. viz :-

Pesach	Shavouth	Succoth
Passover	Pentecost	Tabernacles
Body	Soul	Spirit
Outer Court	Inner Court	Holy of Holies
Praise	Worship	Adoration
Courtship	Marriage	Married Intimacy

This pattern, as clearly portrayed in the plan of Moses' Tabernacle with its three distinct areas, obviously prescribes a certain progression of worship.

This progression marks the route of the worshipper as he sets his face towards the worship of his creator and redeemer God.

- 1: Outer Court. The body. **Praise.**
- 2: Inner Court. The soul. **Worship.**
- 3: Holy of Holies. The spirit. **Adoration.**

1: The Outer Court.

Represents the body, the physical aspect of our being.
 This area of praise frequently involves the use of our physical being to praise and exulting in God. Such praise includes singing, shouting, clapping, waving our hands, raising our hands, jumping, dancing, marching.

2: *The Inner Court.*

Represents the human soul and the employment of its faculties to praise God. This dimension includes the human faculties of emotion, expressing such through singing, weeping, laughter and the expression of emotion through physical activities as mentioned previously.

3: *The Holy of Holies.*

Represents the redeemed spirit of man engaged in the intimacies of the true worship and adoration of God. This dimension is very sacred, personal, intimate and fulfilling. This is the ultimate object of our exercises of praise and worship. To come before God in His intimate presence and meet with Him face to face, in an attitude of reverential awe.

It is to this place also, that the worship leader endeavors to lead the congregation of worshippers. It is this kind of spiritual worshiper for whom the “Father is seeking.” John 4:23. Every church should be a worshipping community.

In the development of such corporate worship, much depends on the leader of the service.

The primary purpose of worship, whether expressed individually or corporately, is to uplift, eulogize and exalt the WORTH-SHIP of God. To exalt His greatness!

Therefore the ultimate purpose of a “worship leader” is not to merely conduct community singing but to lead a congregation into a posture and spirit of true worship of God. His function is to guide and lead the congregants spiritually, from the Outer Court, through the Inner Court, and into the very presence of God in the Holy of Holies. He will usually achieve this by example and exhortation. He should not use the opportunity to preach at the people, but to simply exhort and encourage them by word and example, to enter into an attitude of heart that is conducive to worshipping God.

Qualities in good worship leaders

1. *Worship Leading is a special ministry*

Not everyone has this ability. Often the pastor does not have this particular gift, in which case, he should find someone in the congregation who does possess such a gift and be willing for that person to take the lead in this particular area, under his guidance and spiritual covering. It is essential to have the right person(s) to lead congregational worship.

2. The Leader must be a worshipper

It is essential that one who is called to lead others into worship should be skilled and adept in the worship of God. It is impossible to lead others into something unless the leader has already learned the requirements and skills of worship. This person should be free in his own spirit and able to freely praise and worship God in his personal life.

3. Spiritual Maturity

The worship leader should be a person with experience and maturity in the things of the Spirit. His spiritual development should be equal to (and preferably superior to) the congregation that he is seeking to lead. Such maturity gives the leader a confidence and results in a sense of security in the congregation.

He should be able to control his own spirit so that his personal thoughts, feelings and emotions do not intrude into the meeting. He must also be a man of faith, not only able to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit, but with faith to implement what the Spirit may be saying to the assembled saints. He should be an exhorter who can motivate and encourage the believers.

4. Spiritual Sensitivity

The ideal leader has developed a sensitive ear for the voice of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit Himself will lead the service if the leader will actively move into those promptings which the Spirit will give. Worship services should be led by the Holy Spirit. However, He will always use human channels, so there must be a deep spiritual awareness in the leader. This will be conveyed to the congregation as well. They will begin to develop the ability to hear the promptings of the Spirit and quietly and confidently move into them.

5. Genuine humility

A good leader will always seek to "hide behind Christ." Nothing ruins the spiritual atmosphere of a service more quickly than an egotistical leader who constantly projects himself into the meeting. The Holy Spirit loves to glorify Christ, and is totally unwilling to turn His spotlight on any human being. No flesh should glory in the sight of God. Rather than drawing the congregation's attention to himself, the leader must always seek to focus the attention of the people on Christ.

6. Prayerful preparation

Prior to the service, the leader should always spend some time privately in prayer. The theme of a meeting can be discerned beforehand in this way. The spirit of the leader can be tuned to the Spirit of God and in this way the meeting can move right into God's purposes from the very commencement.

There should be no such things as "preliminaries" in a worship service. The whole service, from the very first moment, is dedicated to the praise and glory of God. Too many preachers regard everything prior to their sermon as a preliminary - necessary, but unimportant. The truth is that what precedes the sermon is usually much more important, for the sermon is addressed to the people, but our worship is addressed to God Himself!

7. Allow sufficient time for worship

The manner in which many "worship services" are hurried through is an insult to the majesty of God. We need to recognize the importance of corporate worship and give ample time to it. Worship time should not be wasted by needless chatter on the part of the leader. His real task is to get the congregation in tune with the Spirit of God just as quickly and sweetly as he can. Unnecessary talk and comment can detract from this purpose. When people have come to worship God and want to give themselves to Him in praise, worship and adoration, it is a sad thing when they are delayed and hindered by the very one who is ordained to lead them into such worship.

8. Be open to the Holy Spirit

It takes real faith to lead a service into worship because such worship cannot be prescribed or programmed beforehand. Many leaders feel they must have a prescribed program. They want to know exactly what is going to happen in a given service and just when it is going to take place. Spiritual worship demands more flexibility than this.

Once the service has commenced, try to keep quietly aware of the way the Spirit is leading. Be prepared to follow His leading step by step. He will instruct you as to just when the worship should take place. Not every service will be the same. God is a God of variety. He does not have to do the same thing every time. He has a special purpose for every gathering.

The leader must learn to discern what the purpose is and to flow along with it, as the Spirit unfolds it step by step. God can even change the order and direction of the service while it is proceeding. A good leader will be able to discern the very songs that should be sung; how many times they should be sung; and with what kind of emphasis!

Sometimes a service will be bright and full of rejoicing. Other times the Spirit may lead in a much quieter way and even into periods of silence which may be extremely profound and meaningful.

9. Be aware of all that is transpiring

The leader should avoid closing his eyes and being "lost in worship." It is wonderfully possible to be fully involved in worship and still be aware of and

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sensitive to the people. The leader should have a sensitivity to the Spirit and at the same time, be exercising a gentle but definite influence over the service.

Simple guidelines for leading worship

1. Begin where the people are

Seek to establish immediate contact with the congregation, right where they are. Quietly demonstrate your leadership with them. Help them to recognize that God has ordained you to lead this service and that if they will cooperate and follow along with you, they will be led right into the Holy of Holies and have a glorious experience of worship.

2. Song leading is not necessarily worship leading

There are many good song leaders who do not have the ability to lead people into worship. However, the worship leader must be able to lead singing and then to lead further on into worship. Most often a worship service will commence with singing. The singing of appropriate songs which eulogize God and speak of His greatness, might and splendor, will help to get the people's minds off themselves and their problems and on to the Lord. Songs of praise and thanksgiving are often appropriate and suitable. Community singing is also a good way to bring the people into unity. As their voices blend, so will their minds and spirits. Once that unity has been achieved, the people may be led on into realms of worship. We begin with praise and then move on into worship.

3. Allow the Holy Spirit to give direction

This may come in any one of a number of ways. It may spring out of the first song that is sung. This may set the theme for the entire service. Often the Spirit will lead from one song to another, all on the same or relevant themes. If there are those present with charismatic endowments, the Spirit may use these to indicate the course the service should take. This may be communicated through a prophecy or some revelation. Sometimes the mind of the Spirit is imposed on the service in a very quiet and undramatic fashion. It is only after the gathering, when looking back, that one sees so clearly how beautifully the Spirit led, and what unity and harmony was woven into the fabric of the service.

4. Avoid intrusions and cross-currents

This is where the spiritual maturity of the leader is so necessary. He must be able to discern a new emphasis which might be introduced, which is not of the Spirit. He must be spiritually alert to recognize such a trend. A meeting can be very subtly redirected if one is not careful and watchful. Once the Spirit has set the course and direction, be sensitive to any intrusion which may change the emphasis. The intrusion may seem quite harmless. It may come in the form of a lovely chorus which is quite scriptural in content and yet it changes

completely the direction in which God is seeking to lead the people. The leader must be loving and yet firm in keeping the worship on target.

There are many ways in which he can bring the meeting back on course again. He may say directly, "Now friends, let us keep pursuing this direction which the Spirit is indicating, and let us not turn aside." He may commence another chorus which reinforces the original theme of the Spirit. There may come a further word of prophecy, directing the attention once more to the original theme.

It requires faith and boldness on the part of the leader. He must exercise discretion and tact, but he must not compromise the purpose of God for that occasion. This often demands great wisdom and grace. The Holy Spirit will supply these if we trust Him implicitly.

5. Recognize transition and change

The Spirit may direct a service along any line He wishes. This frequently means that there may be a change of emphasis during the course of the service. In fact, this may happen several times. These transition periods are very important. The leader must be ahead of the people anticipating what the Spirit is wanting to do. He must give clear and firm leadership during these transitional periods, so the meeting does not begin to wander aimlessly. If a time of indecision is allowed to develop, someone may be tempted to try to give direction and a wrong note may be introduced. The leader must always remember that God has anointed and appointed him to lead the people and he is therefore responsible for doing just that. Do not rule the meeting with a heavy hand. Do not try to impose your will on the people. Keep a firm but gentle grip on the direction and progress of the worship.

6. Keep the purpose in mind

Never lose sight of the objective and purpose of the gathering. It is first to praise and glorify the Lord. Second, to edify and bless the people. Never allow the gathering to degenerate to anything less than these basic objectives.

7. "Create a Symphony."

One of the many fine choruses we often sing says, "Lord, make us a symphony, a symphony of worship." The Greek word "symphoneo" from which we derive symphony, means to "agree together." Jesus said, "If any two of you shall agree together." He used this word, 'symphoneo,' to "produce a symphony of sound." A worship service should be like a symphony. Everything should blend harmoniously together. The voices should all blend, the instruments should blend, the various parts of the s*****

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*****ectators instead of participators. Frequently we find the minister doing everything and the congregation merely watching and listening. The New Testament encourages the participation of every member. However, good solid teaching on this subject needs to be given first. God's people should be taught that He wants to hear their voices raised in worship. They must be taught how to participate, and having been taught, given opportunity to do so. Verbally encourage the people to enter in. Exhort them to lift their voices in praise. Make opportunities for them to express their praise.

9. Let everything be done decently and in order

Many churches use this scripture (1 Cor 14:4) as an excuse for not allowing any congregational participation. They are so intent on maintaining "decency and order" that they allow nothing to be done. This is not what the Bible says. It does NOT say, "Let nothing be done, decently and in order." It says "Let EVERYTHING be done."

Let there be participation. Let there be prophecies, revelations, psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. But let them be done in such a manner that there is no confusion, for God is not the author of confusion. (1 Cor 14:40).

10. Aim to Excel

Our goal, as we learn to praise and worship God, should be to ultimately excel in these things. We should aim for progress and development in these vital areas. Such excellence will not be human excellence. It will not be the advanced development of human talent and ability. It will not be the employment of professionals, with correctness and precision. It will be the deepening of spiritual life. It will be the sharpening of spiritual sensitivity, the growth of spiritual awareness and the ability to make a spiritual response to the prompting of the Spirit of God.

**The ultimate objective of our
worship
is to exalt and glorify God.
The more effectively we can do this,
the more acceptable is our praise.**

Practical thoughts about the Worship Service

1. Commence with meaningful prayer.

Encourage all members of the worship team, instrumentalists, singers, dancers, amplified sound technicians etc. to come together before each service for prayer and interaction. This helps to promote greater unity and harmony among them. Should there ever be any indications of disunity or wrong attitudes between any members, these should be prayerfully resolved at such a pre-service gathering. Don't allow this time to degenerate into a formality. It must remain a meaningful time of spiritual interaction with God the Spirit and with one another. It is an opportunity to tune the spirits of music group members to the same pitch of the Spirit.

2. Begin each service with thanksgiving and praise in song.

(Psa 100:4). *"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise, give thanks to him, praise his name."*

Thanksgiving and Praise is the first step into the presence of God. It is a spiritual key that may be thrust by faith, into the door that leads into God's presence. Don't be content to merely sing about thanksgiving, heartily encourage the congregation to genuinely give thanks to God. Motivate them to lift up their hearts and spirits to God in real acts of thanksgiving and praise.

3. Prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit for the right song or hymn.

God has a theme and a message for every service. Often the right song will set the tone for that theme. Do not simply choose some songs at random. Try to discern in your inner spirit what song(s) the Holy Spirit would like to use. Sometimes He will so powerfully minister through an appropriate song that the theme of the whole service will be powerfully indicated.

4. Do not be afraid to sing the song more than once

Some times a particular portion of a song may be especially anointed and blessed. Feel free to repeat that portion until its message truly penetrates the spirits of the people. Variations of tempo and volume can also affect the atmosphere. Rousing songs or hymns can stir up the people and to exercise the "High praises of God". On other occasions, slower, more worshipful songs may set a more serious mood in which to meditate on the grace and goodness of God.

5. Exhort and encourage the people

Some worship leaders have a gift to motivate the people to really "sing unto the Lord." Hymns are often sung because it is our tradition and custom to sing. We have a much worthier purpose than this. It is to sing unto the Lord - to

direct our focus heavenward in song. Our spirits can make meaningful contact with the Spirit of God through worship in song.

6. Commence with songs of praise and thanksgiving

Allow the people to genuinely express their praises through them. Songs are not praises in themselves. They are merely vehicles through which we may express our praise. It is highly possible to sing many hymns and songs without expressing any true praise.

7. Songs of praise will inspire the people to worship.

We often begin with praise and then the people move progressively through various levels of praise until they move right into worship, which is the highest level of praise. However, they usually need to be led into these expressions. The worship leader is like a shepherd, going before the sheep, through the meadows of Praise and into the sanctuary of worship. Don't settle for simply praising God. Worship is a higher level of praise and we want to pursue God to the greatest degree possible.

8. Do not "rush through" the song service.

Many ministers look on this part of the service as the "preliminaries," before the main event, i.e. preaching. Worship is frequently regarded as an irksome, but traditional, necessity. Many times it deteriorates into a religious ritual simply because insufficient time is given for its proper development.

Take time to sing, praise and worship. This is a very important function of our gathering. Don't allow the clock to become more important than experiencing the presence of God.

9. Allow opportunity for congregational participation.

Encourage spontaneous expression. Someone may lead in prayer, which may set the tone for the meeting. Another may prophesy, and the exhortation may supply the theme for the rest of the service. One of the important features of congregational worship is to stir and motivate the people to reach out to God. They need to be brought out of their shells of reticence and indifference and opened up to fully participate in the congregation's expressions to God.

10. The manifestation of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:8-11)

Manifestations of the Spirit should find expression in believers' worship services. Paul exhorts us, "Do not quench the Holy Spirit". (1 Thess 5:19). If we quench the Holy Spirit, we kill the true life of the service. Encourage participation and expression through these spiritual expressions. However, the appointed and anointed leader should retain spiritual authority over the service at all times.

11. All things should be done to mutual edification.

Every scriptural manifestation is legitimate and proper, but let everything that is done, and the manner in which it is done, be to the edifying of the whole gathering. (1 Cor 14:26). The overall result of an anointed service should be that every member is edified, encouraged, strengthened and blessed. Obviously there may be some exceptions with people who are not spiritually oriented and do not appreciate the liberty of the Spirit.

The order and quality of a service should not be determined by such people. Paul insists that we must rather please God than men.

Gal 1:10

10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. (NIV)

12. Avoid contributions that cause confusion.

"God is not the author of confusion..." (1 Cor 14:33). If the service begins to move into confusion, take charge and lead it back out of confusion. If necessary, pause and explain to the people what is happening, thus clarifying the situation. Use such times to teach the right and wrong way to do things.

13. Let everything be done as unto the Lord, and to the glory of God.

Remember the aim of every gathering is to glorify God and edify the believers. Because our worship, as with everything else we do, should be done "as unto God" we must always do it whole heartedly. We must strive for excellence in our worship. Not necessarily the excellence of technical perfection, but that excellence we achieve when we do something from the heart to the very best of our ability.

14. Make the words available to all

Having the words available, in one form or another, will greatly encourage participation. It is embarrassing, especially for new comers, if everyone is singing except them. We must make it easy for all present to join in the worship. Overhead projectors are very useful because the congregation are much freer to worship without books in their hands.

Do not be afraid however, at a certain point, to put down the song book or words and just worship from the heart.

15. Obviously there are certain principles involved.

In the leading of a song service or a worship service, you must carefully avoid becoming mechanical or too formal. Let there be an underlying freedom. Be flexible. Don't insist on keeping meticulously to the program. Be constantly sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit and be willing to follow them. Good

song leading entails much more than waving the arms, even if this is done correctly. The liberty of the Spirit and spontaneity are more important than technical correctness.

16. Hide behind Jesus

that the people may "...see no man, but Jesus only." (Matt 17:8). I remember a church of which I was the minister for many years in Brisbane, Australia. The first time I stepped up to the pulpit, I saw some words carved into the pulpit. They confronted every person who stepped up to that pulpit to speak or minister. The words said, "*Sir, we would see Jesus*" (John 12:21). We ought always to bear this in mind. The people have not come to see you or hear you. They have come to see and hear Jesus. Our task, with the help of the Spirit, is to draw aside the veil, that every eye may see the Lord and worship before Him. This should be the ultimate aim of every servant of Christ who leads a worship service.

**“Sir, We would see
Jesus!”**

(John 12:21)

THE PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF PRAISE

The importance of praise is emphasized throughout the entire Bible. Praise has always been important. However, in the final days of this age, praise and worship are especially important, and play a special role in the fulfillment of God's purposes. This is why God is restoring praise to His people today. We are moving rapidly towards the manifest reign of Christ on the earth.

One of the great characteristics of that Age will be praise and worship. So God is preparing His people for that time. We are already entering into the Kingdom and part of our preparation is excelling in praise and worship.

THE HIGH PRAISES OF GOD (Psalm 149:6)

The first portion of Psalm 149 is filled with exhortations and commandments to praise the Lord. There are at least ten clear commands to praise God in a variety of ways. We are told to sing unto Him; rejoice in Him; be joyful in our King; dance before Him; praise Him with musical instruments etc.

In V6, we reach the highest expression of that praise. The highest level of pure praise. David calls it "the high praises of God." The ultimate weaponry of God's last-day army are the *"high praises of God in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand."* With such weapons we can wage victorious warfare against the enemy and gain the final victory, in the Name of our God.

God is seeking to teach us many things about praise. He is leading us from one truth to another progressively. Always seeking to further purify our praises, until at last we are able to enter into the high praises of God.

He is seeking to:

- a. Enlarge our understanding of praise.
- b. Purify our motives in praise.
- c. Refine our expressions of praise.
- d. Establish His throne upon them (Psa 22:3).
- e. Manifest His authority through them.

In verse 8 God tells us what He will accomplish when we begin to exercise those high praises. He will *"...bind kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron."* These are not earthly human kings and nobles. They are the principalities and powers who exercise spiritual rule over the heathen nations.

In response to the high praises of His people, God is going to bind these satanic principalities and release the peoples they have held in bondage to receive the blessing of the Gospel of the Kingdom. This is going to pave the way for the greatest spiritual awakening the world has ever witnessed. The great pagan nations of earth are going to open up to the Kingdom of God. Those multitudes which Joel saw prophetically, in the "valley of decision," are going to be released from the spiritual bondage of centuries, and be free to receive the blessing of God's glorious reign.

Psalm 67 GOD'S SAVING HEALTH TO ALL NATIONS

- 1 *God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah.*
- 2 *That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.*
- 3 *Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.*
- 4 *O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah.*
- 5 *Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.*
- 6 *Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us.*
- 7 *God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him. (KJV)*

This prophetic Psalm opens with a cry for God's mercy and blessing to be revealed to all nations. It closes with the prediction that God SHALL bless us, the earth will yield her increase, and "... *all the ends of the earth shall fear him.*" The key which releases such universal blessing is the praises of God's people. (V.3,5).

NOTICE THE PROGRESSION OF PRAISE

1. **Let the people of God praise Thee, O God.** This refers to the people of God - His redeemed people. They are to be the leaders of an army of praising people. The trigger which precipitates the great blessing of Jehovah for the whole earth is the praises of His redeemed community.
2. **Let all the people praise Thee** - signifying a time when praise will no longer be limited to God's redeemed people, but it will spread far beyond them. Even the unregenerate will begin to praise Jehovah. They will begin to recognize Him as the one true God and the only one worthy of praise, worship and adoration.
3. **Let the nations be glad and sing for joy.** At this point, entire nations will begin to speak favorable and in praise of Jehovah. They will begin to realize

that the only solution to their humanly-insoluble dilemma is in the intervention of the government of God.

When this chain reaction of praise has been triggered off by God's people, it will bring the government and justice of God to the earth (V.4). Only this can cause the "*way of God to be known upon earth, and His saving health among all nations.*" (V.2).

The word used here for "health" is "YESHAH," meaning salvation, deliverance, victory, prosperity, well-being etc. All these blessings are inherent in one Person, His Name is JESUS. He is the only answer to the world's multitude dilemmas. It is for Him alone that we look. His coming will be accelerated as we enter into the **high praises of God**.

Psalm 72 THE KINGDOM REIGN

Psalm 72 is a glorious, prophetic Messianic Psalm which outlines many wonderful aspects of the coming Kingdom of our Messiah, Jesus. The whole Psalm is filled with marvelous facts about the Kingdom. However, we will mention only two of them, which are in keeping with our present theme.

Ps 72:15-19

15 *And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised.*

16 *There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.*

17 *His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.*

18 *Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things.*

19 *And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen. (KJV)*

N.B.

V 15b. *"...daily, shall he (Messiah) be praised."*

V 17. *"His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed."*

One of the integral features of God's eternal, universal reign upon earth will be the worship of Jehovah. God's throne will be established in Jerusalem. Christ will be seated upon it. King David will be His Vice-Regent (Jer 30:9; Ezek 37:24,25).

All nations will go up to Jerusalem from year to year to worship the King and keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech 14:16).

16 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. (KJV)

The house of the Lord will be established on top of the mountain and people of every nation will come to be taught of the Lord

Isa 2:2-5

2 In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.

*3 Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the******

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*****er, "...come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of our God, and He will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths..." (Micah 4:2).

Micah 4:2-5

2 And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

3 And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

4 But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.

5 For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever. (KJV)

Any who refuse or neglect to come and worship will forfeit the rain on their land (Zech 14:17).

In that day the watchword will be "....*HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD*...."
(Zech 14:20).

WORSHIP IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

The book of Revelation forms the culmination of the biblical prophetic revelation. It is also the culmination, the grand finale of the worship paradigm that begins in Genesis and commands some 800 references throughout the bible until its dramatic crescendo in Revelation.

There are three dominant themes running through Revelation :-

1. Praising people. An earthly and a heavenly company.
2. Prophetic purposes. Orchestrated in heaven, enacted on earth.
3. The emergent manifestation of God's glorious Kingdom.

The three themes are inter-related and inter-active. All of them begin in the early chapters, gathering momentum throughout the book and achieving their tumultuous fulfillment at the end of the book.

The progressive development of worship in Revelation commences with one man in the first chapter and grows in numbers, intensity and drama throughout the book until the breath taking finale.

1: JOHN ON PATMOS. Rev 1:9-18

9 I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

10 On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,

11 which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

13 and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.

14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire.

15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.

16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.

18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. (NIV)

2: THE FOUR BEASTS AND TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS. Rev 4:8-11

8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."

9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever,

10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." (NIV)

3: THE BEASTS AND ELDERS, 10,000 x 10,000. Rev 5:7-14

7 He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

9 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

12 In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

14 The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshipped. (NIV)

4: THE COMPANY THAT NO MAN COULD NUMBER. Rev 7:9-12

9 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

10 And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

11 All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God,

12 saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" (NIV)

5: CHRIST IS KING! Rev 11:15-17

15 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "**The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.**"

16 And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God,

17 saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. (NIV)

6: ALL NATIONS SHALL WORSHIP HIM. Rev 15:2-4

2 And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God

3 and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.

4 Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed." (NIV)

7: HE THAT SAT ON THE THRONE. Rev 19:4-16

4 The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: "Amen, Hallelujah!"

5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying: "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!"

6 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

8 Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

9 Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

10 At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.

12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.

13 *He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.*

14 *The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.*

15 *Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.*

16 *On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.** (NIV)*

There are seven aspects to the worship ascribed to Christ in this scripture.
(Rev 19:2-10)

1: It was inspired by a vision of Christ enthroned. V.4.

In Rev 5:9. we hear the Song of Redemption.

In Rev 7:14 an anthem for protection amidst great tribulation.

In Rev 19:5 worship inspired by a vision of the enthroned Messiah.

The praise and worship evoked by the splendid sight of Christ enthroned, surpasses every other worship event. I believe that in these last days, God is going to grant to us a new revelation of the glorified, enthroned and reigning Messiah. It will bring forth from us higher, richer, deeper praises than we have ever known or imagined.

2: Worship involves reverence and service. V.5.

5 *Then a voice came from the throne, saying: "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear (reverence) him, both small and great!" (NIV)*

3: Prostrations before the throne. V.4.

4 *The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down (prostrated themselves) and worshipped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: "Amen, Hallelujah!" (NIV)*

Prostration, casting oneself face down upon the ground, is a dramatic, extravagant, ultimate expression of worship. I believe we will see much of this and like expressions as we draw ever closer to this prophetic moment.

4: Glorious unity. Vs 1, 6.

Rev 19:1

1 *And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: (KJV)*

N.B A great voice, (singular) of much people. (plural)

Rev 19:6

6 *And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. (KJV)*

N.B. The voice, (singular) of a great multitude (plural)

These verses indicate the glorious spiritual unity of the great company. Though there was a tremendous multitude that no man could number, they sang and worshipped with ONE VOICE.

5: Gladness and rejoicing. v.7.

Rev 19:7

7 *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. (KJV)*

The Kingdom of God symbolizes a wedding, not a funeral. The Bride of Christ expresses her admiration, adoration and worship in tones of gladness and rejoicing too marvelous for words. Such rejoicing should accompany our worship too.

6: The righteous acts of the saints. Rev 19:8

8 *And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (NAS)*

Some versions of the scripture say “the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints”, but the NAS affords a truer rendering, for it is the righteous ACTS of those saints that constitute the fine linen robes.

7: Spiritual equality before the throne. V.10.

Rev 19:10

10 *And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (NAS)*

John instinctively fell at the feet of his heavenly guide who immediately remonstrated with him, saying, “Don’t worship me, worship God. For we are all equal before His supreme presence.”

WORSHIP THE ALMIGHTY.

One of the names that John ascribes to Messiah Jesus is “The Almighty”. The Greek word he uses is *pantokrator*, meaning the All Powerful One. The word occurs 10 times in the New Testament and nine of those occurrences are in the book of Revelation.

The worship in Revelation confirms many aspects and styles of worship.

1: Kingdom of priests worship. Rev 5:9-10

9 *And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.*

10 *You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth. (NIV)*

2: The worship of Jesus. Rev 5:11-13

11 *Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.*

12 *In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"*

13 *Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" (NIV)*

3: The use of musical instruments to accompany worship.

Rev 5:8

8 *And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (NIV)*

Rev 14:2

2 *And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. (NIV)*

4: Loud burst of praise. Rev 19:6

6 *Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. (NIV)*

5: A large, international, universal company. Rev 7:9-10

9 *After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.*

10 *And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." (NIV)*

6: A company of both Jew and Gentile.

Rev 7:4

4 *Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. (NIV)*

Rev 7:9-12

9 *After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.*

10 *And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."*

11 *All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God,*

12 *saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"*

(NIV)

7: An everlasting praise meeting. Rev 7:11-12

11 *All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God,*

**saying: "Amen!
Praise and glory and wisdom
and thanks and honor
and power and strength
be to our God
for ever and ever. Amen!"**

(NIV)

A Simple Guide to Preaching

HOW TO PREPARE A MESSAGE or BIBLE STUDY

Table of Contents.

1	Homiletics	236
2	The textual sermon	248
3	Expository preaching	260
4	The biographical sermon	269
5	The Preacher	273
6	Preaching with the anointing	284
7	Teaching with the anointing	291

Chapter One

Homiletics

Preaching the Word of God is among the greatest privileges entrusted to man. It is also one of his greatest responsibilities. Through the “foolishness” of preaching (1 Cor 1:21), God has chosen to reveal Himself to men. This knowledge of God, is able to lead men to eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. It is also able to transform them into the image and likeness of God (2 Cor 3:18).

These pages contain the simple basic principles of preaching. They were intended primarily for those thousands of fine church leaders whose circumstances have denied them the training needed to develop their latent skills. I originally prepared these notes for the students of the "**Africa Christian Training School**" in Harare, Zimbabwe. (1980)

Seven years of ministry in Africa brought me into contact with thousands of pastors and church leaders; many of whom never had the opportunity of any formal training in the art of preaching and teaching. They have not been able to study the principles of preaching; consequently their abilities and skills are largely undeveloped.

An adequate preaching and teaching ministry is essential to the growth and spiritual development of a congregation. It is to these fine men and women that this simple training is lovingly dedicated.

WHAT IS HOMILETICS?

The art of preaching is called "HOMILETICS," derived from the Greek words *homileo* and *homilia*, which mean "to be in company with, i.e., to converse, and communicate."

Acts 20:11 is based on *homileo*. Note how it is translated in the Living Bible: "*They all went back upstairs and ate the Lord's Supper together; then Paul preached [homileo] another long sermon - so it was dawn when he finally left them!*"

Homiletics involves the study of everything related to the art of preaching sermons. Good sermons (communication) are birthed out of good communion (companionship) and fellowship. The definition of “homiletics” includes the idea of being at one with one’s audience, experiencing a good rapport with them.

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There are two distinct aspects involved in preaching: **Firstly**, the divine; **secondly**, the human. Homiletics is the study of the human aspect!

A: HOW TO BE EFFECTIVE

Preaching is the art of communicating divine truth through **human personality**. A preacher is essentially a communicator. He receives truth from God and communicates it effectively to men.

God gives the revelation; man provides the presentation.

In order to do this effectively, he must learn to do several things well.

1. Waiting on God

Firstly, he must learn how to wait on God. The preacher must learn how to be still in the presence of God and to discern the voice of the Lord speaking within his own spirit.

Every worthwhile sermon begins in the heart and mind of God who is the source of all truth. He is the fountain of all knowledge. The effective preacher's first task is to learn to receive the thoughts of God. Rarely will he ever hear the audible voice of God.

Divine truth will distil quietly in his spirit like the morning dew. The prospective preacher must wait patiently in the presence of God. There he will receive the precious thoughts and truths that God is always willing to share with those who seek Him diligently.

It is good to make a habit of spending time in God's presence. Set aside some portion of every day to enter the presence of God and wait patiently on Him. You will soon learn how to perceive the voice of God speaking quietly in your spirit.

We should not enter God's presence with the sole idea of "getting a sermon." We need to enter God's presence firstly to expose ourselves regularly to the scrutiny and counsel of God.

Rushing into His presence with an urgency which "needs a sermon for tomorrow" is certainly not an attitude of heart that can receive the wonderful truths of God. We should allow truth an opportunity to have its effect on us before we endeavour to share it with others.

2. Study The Bible

Ideally, the preacher should come before God with his Bible in hand. Make time to sit quietly and patiently before God in this way. Ask for illumination and inspiration on His Word.

Prayerfully seek out the counsel, wisdom and instructions of the Lord in His Word. Spread out the Bible before you and read it in His presence.

Sometimes it is good to follow a regular pattern of reading, beginning where you left off the previous day. This helps you to go consistently through the Bible, instead of reading here and there and neglecting large portions of the Scriptures.

At other times, you may seek some prompting of the Spirit as to where you should read. In this way, you do not get into a rut.

3. Keep a notebook

A notebook in which to record the thoughts and ideas that come to your mind in these times of quiet waiting is essential. It is amazing how quickly one may forget the most wonderful truth, if the thought is not recorded while it is fresh in your mind.

Practice writing down every significant thought which comes to your mind as you prayerfully read the Scriptures. If a theme suggests itself to you, follow it through as far as you can, and jot down everything you can on the subject. In this way, you will soon develop a good source of sermon material.

Read through the notebook every once in a while. The thoughts will begin to expand in your heart. You will find that some themes will occupy your mind for weeks, expanding continually as you meditate on them.

Get into the habit of talking to the Lord about His Word. When there are things you do not understand, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the meaning to you. Ask for the spirit of revelation (Eph 1:17).

Then learn to wait quietly and patiently before God as He gently directs the answers into your spirit. Record them as they come to you. Get the truth down in your notebook. Don't trust them merely to memory. Even the best memory is strengthened by writing things down.

4. Be Cleansed By The Word

Try to avoid the attitude that seeks a word from God so that you can preach about it on Sunday morning. Do not always be looking for spiritual bullets that you can fire at someone. Recognise the primary need of your own heart. Let God deal with your heart through His Word and by His Spirit. Let the Word wash and cleanse you first.

Sharing what God has spoken to you about in the way of cleansing and correction is some of the best preaching there is.

It is important for you to feed your own soul. One of the traps that preachers can fall into is this: they are so intent on finding food for their congregation that their own spiritual welfare is neglected.

This is one of the hazards of the ministry. The thought is expressed this way in the Song of Solomon 1:6: "*..they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.*"

Sometimes a pastor may be so involved in looking after the spiritual welfare of his flock that he sadly neglects his own spiritual well-being. This is one of the prime reasons that ministers fail. A minister cannot afford to neglect his own spiritual life.

Let the Word of God take root in your own heart and spirit. Let it grow strong in your personal life and experience. Then, when you preach, you will minister out of experience. You will not be speaking as one with a theory but rather, sharing things which you yourself fully comprehend and have experienced.

The following verse teaches us this, "*the hard-working farmer must be first to partake of the crops*" (2 Tim 2:6 nkjv). What you plant and harvest (in a spiritual sense) - you must first partake of (experience) before feeding it to others. You should never feed others what you have not first eaten. You should not try to guide others down paths and trails you have not first walked yourself.

As the Word of God becomes incarnate (that is, indwells you), **you** will then become a message from God. You will not be one who merely recites sermons, but one whose very life and lifestyle ministers life, blessing and strength to those who know and hear you.

B. SOME FALSE IDEAS ABOUT HOMILETICS

There are at least *four common mistakes* which people tend to make in regard to homiletics.

1. "Preparation is unnecessary"

The first mistaken idea is that preparation is unnecessary and indicates a lack of faith. People who take this view tend to feel that real faith despises any attempt to prepare the mind, and merely stands before the people - believing that God will then supply the words to speak.

A favourite scripture of such people is Psalm 81:10: "*...open thy mouth and I will fill it.*" The context of the Psalm reveals that this verse has nothing to do with preaching! This tendency to ignore the biblical context of a scripture is rather typical of this kind of person. It betrays an irresponsible and naive

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attitude. This type of person is often known to speak nonsense. We would not wish to blame God for this person's words.

There undoubtedly is a place for inspiration, but there is also a valid place for preparation. Preparation can truly be inspired.

2. "Human Ability is sufficient."

The second mistake goes almost to the other extreme. In this instance, a complete confidence is placed in preparation and human ability. There is little, or no dependence on the Holy Spirit, but a self-confidence which is the result of training and the development of natural ability.

Such training can certainly produce a very interesting and convincing talk. However, it is only the anointing of the Spirit on the message that can minister the life of God to the people.

The truth is that an effective ministry needs both the divine and the human aspects. God can certainly bless and anoint thoughts which have been diligently prayed over and carefully considered.

Let your preparation consist of thoughtful preparation with earnest prayer. Determine to be the very best you can, but make sure your confidence is in God and not yourself. Always trust Him for His essential anointing and blessing on your preaching.

3. That homiletics provide ready made sermons.

Some preachers have the idea that once they understand the principles of homiletics this will take all the work out of study and they will always be able to quickly prepare effective messages and sermons. However, homiletics is not a quick and simple method of obtaining messages, nor does it take away the need for diligent study and preparation. It merely simplifies the actual concept of the message and ensures that it is developed in a manner that will be easier for your listeners to follow and understand.

4. That a sound knowledge of homiletics is all that is required.

A sermon or message may be well thought through and well prepared and yet lack the vital qualities that will make it effective and productive. Homiletics is the human side of sermon preparation but we need the Divine aspect too. In fact, without this our sermons will be humanistic and powerless. The more clever we become at speaking, the less we may depend on God's help and anointing and this will reduce our ministry to the level of human influence.

C. SOME FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE SERMON PREPARATION.

Who will you be speaking to?

What is the objective of the gathering?

Who is likely to be there?

Are there special features and requirements?

D: SIX CATEGORIES OF SERMONS.

1. **Evangelistic**, emphasising Salvation and Healing.

2. **Devotional**, inspiring people in their love for God.
3. **Pastoral**, dealing with issues related to the welfare of their souls.
4. **Doctrinal**, establishing believers in their faith.
5. **Ethical**, emphasising the principles and ethics of Christian living.
6. **Special occasions**, for weddings, funerals, baptisms etc.

E. FOUR AREAS OF HOMILETICS

There are four major areas with which homiletics is concerned:

1. Concept

This has to do with obtaining the original theme for the message. It is the art of knowing how to receive a message from God. It deals with how to get the initial idea and theme for a sermon.

Frequently, a seed-thought is sown in the mind, and may remain there for months before it develops to the size and proportion suitable to be shared with others.

Through experience, one is able to develop the ability to recognise a line of truth suitable for sharing with God's people.

As you meditate on the Word, there comes an inner quickening of a particular aspect. Something suddenly lights up for you. It almost seems to leap from the page. A sense of excitement is aroused within you. It is as though you have discovered a large gold nugget! You can scarcely wait to break it open and investigate its value!

2. Composition

Having received inspiration on a particular truth, you must now begin to analyse it to discover all which that truth contains. Your notebook is important right here! As you prayerfully meditate, write down carefully every thought that comes to mind.

At this stage, you may simply make a list of every idea that your subject suggests to you. Stay with it until you feel you have exhausted the theme and uncovered every possible area of truth contained in your subject.

Don't worry about the neatness and order at this stage. You frequently need to write very quickly to keep abreast of the flow of inspiration you are getting. Just make sure you get everything down on paper. You can sort it all out later.

3. Construction

Having exhaustively analysed your subject material and listed every aspect of truth you can find within it, you must now begin to assemble those thoughts in an orderly fashion. This is essential so that you can give further prayerful consideration to the subject.

Getting the material into some proper sequence and progression will help you enormously in this regard. It will also assist you greatly in your presentation of the subject to others. Sharing a developing progression of thought helps others to understand and follow your line of reasoning. If your presentation is all jumbled up, it makes it very difficult for people to absorb your message. Sermon construction aims to make it as simple as possible for your listeners to grasp.

This is the essence of sermon construction. It is very important for every preacher to develop this.

4. Communication

Finally, we come to the presentation of the message:

The clear and effective communication of the truth.

- How to present your subject in a manner which will captivate the minds and hearts of your hearers.
- How to develop your thoughts in such an orderly manner that your audience can easily follow the line of truth you are seeking to convey.
- How to motivate your listeners to appropriate actions, for we are to be *"doers of the word and not hearers only"* (Jas 1:22)

These concepts comprise the essential aspects of sermon preparation. We will be dealing with each of them more fully later in this study.

F. THREE TYPES OF SERMON PREPARATION

1. The Written Sermon

This is the method which demands a great deal of time in preparation. It involves very copious notes. Sometimes the whole message is written out beforehand. The preacher knows exactly what he wishes to say and how he wants to say it. Every thought is written out in full.

This often involves several pages of notes. It gives attention to great detail, the construction of a sentence and the correct word to use. Every aspect of the proposed sermon is considered in meticulous detail.

This method has advantages and disadvantages. An advantage is that the whole sermon has been the subject of very careful attention to detail. Thus, there should be an adequate coverage of every important area of relevant truth. Nothing has been left to chance. This style should ensure a complete and comprehensive treatment of every subject.

The disadvantage in the presentation of this type of sermon is that it often comes across as uninteresting and does not capture the listener's attention. This style of presentation can easily become extremely boring.

2. "Skeleton-type" Notes

This is the most commonly used method, and the one which I feel is the most effective. Notes are kept to a minimum, affording sufficient outline of the message to prompt the memory.

The brief notes form the "skeleton" of the message. They are the bones which give shape and structure to what the preacher desires to say. As he speaks, he puts "flesh" on the bones and a "body" to his sermon. He amplifies the thoughts that his brief notes have stimulated.

This method allows the preacher much more flexibility. He is not tied to his notes so much. He is more open to the inspiration that will often come to him while he is actually preaching. His delivery is more spontaneous and interesting, but the framework of his message keeps his mind on the track. He is able to give an adequate, well thought-out coverage of his subject, but his presentation is not hard to listen to.

3. The Inspirational Sermon

This style of preaching is spontaneous and usually presented without notes at the time of delivery. The subject is often given a good deal of careful thought beforehand, and the mind and heart are filled with the vital aspects of the message.

This style is often used to deliver the more inspirational type of sermon. Evangelistic messages can be presented very effectively in this way. The sermon flows from the heart and often carries a strong emotional involvement.

This kind of preaching can be exciting and stimulating when presented by a capable and experienced preacher. It stirs the emotions as well as informing the mind.

There are two potential weaknesses in this style. The first is that it often lacks meaningful content, and the spirits and minds of the hearers are not edified. The second is that the delivery may become over-emotional, and become irrational and unconvincing.

4. Summary

I would suggest that the use of skeleton-type notes combines the better features of both the other styles. The notes are not so heavy that the preacher tends to get bogged down in them. He has room to be flexible, and his mind remains open to fresh inspiration even while he is preaching.

On the other hand, he does have an orderly format of thought before him. He does not stand before his audience and talk randomly about disconnected concepts.

Skeleton-type notes are suitable for both teaching and preaching. The teaching mode usually requires a fuller treatment of the subject, so some form of notes is most essential. It is difficult for a teacher to adequately cover his subject without the aid of some notes.

I would, therefore, encourage you to concentrate mostly on mastering the skeleton-type notes approach. Use this method in your study times. As you meditate on the Bible, practice making short, cryptic notes on the inspiration and revelation you receive.

This will help you also when you come to the construction of your message. Familiarity with this style of note-making will help you immensely when you stand to preach. It helps train your mind in orderly patterns of thought. This also makes you more articulate and easier to listen to.

G. SEVEN KINDS OF SERMONS

I want to introduce you now to seven different kinds of sermons. I will try to explain briefly the idea behind each kind, and how you can use it.

A pastor should become familiar with each type. This will give added variety to his ministry, and make it much more interesting for a congregation who may be listening to him week after week.

Over a period of time, it will help him present a much wider coverage of Bible truths. The ministry of any preacher is enriched by versatility.

1. TEXTUAL

This style is usually based on one relatively short portion of Scripture. In fact, as the name suggests, it usually concentrates on one Scripture "text."

It involves choosing an appropriate statement of Scripture. Then you investigate it, analyse it and discover all the truth it contains. You then present that truth in an orderly and progressive manner that is easy for the hearers to assimilate.

2. TOPICAL

Here the preacher aims to present a specific topic to his congregation.

For example, he may take the subject of "justification." His aim would be, firstly, to discover everything the Bible has to say on this enthralling subject.

He would then arrange all the Scripture references and thoughts he gets into an orderly format. He then develops his theme as fully and faithfully as possible. His objective is to tell his audience everything they should know on this important subject.

Of course, he may not be able to do this in one teaching session; so he will then prepare a series of messages or teachings on that same subject. This ensures a much fuller treatment of the topic.

The **Topical Concordance** is of value when preparing such a message. There, one can quickly find some scripture references relating to the topic concerned. A good reference Bible is also helpful. This will also enable you to follow a given theme throughout the Scriptures.

3. TYPICAL

This is the art of uncovering and communicating truth which is hidden beneath the surface of the various "types" in the Bible.

A "type" is a person, object or event which is prophetically symbolic of someone or something yet to come. It is similar to, and characteristic of that person or event.

In its biblical application, it often refers to a Bible character or event which foreshadows some future one.

For example, the Passover Lamb in Exodus is a type of Christ. Every detail of the paschal lamb spoke prophetically of the redemptive role Christ would fulfil as the "*Lamb of God*" (John 1:29). Every prophetic symbol was fulfilled when Christ died for the sins of the world.

Biblical types are often referred to as "*shadows of things to come*" (Heb 8:5; 10:1)

Such persons and events are like a person walking with the sun behind him. His body casts a shadow into the future, before him, portraying the shape of things to come.

The Law of God was a shadow of the good things to come. It represented, and was a shadow of, the better things which were to come in Christ (Heb 10:1).

The "holy days" of the Old Covenant were also shadows of things to come (Col 2:17). Those holy days were not complete in themselves. Part of the purpose of their fulfilment was to project a prophetic picture of things which were yet to come.

The interpretation and exposition of Bible types is a rather specialised task; it deserves the skill of those who are mature and knowledgeable in biblical subjects.

Novices should avoid attempting to preach from the more profound types, since unskilled interpretations can lead into all kinds of unfortunate error.

A deep and thorough knowledge of the whole Bible is essential to those who seek to expound the meaning of the types. Such teachings should be substantiated and undergirded by the whole Bible.

a. Principles For Use. When you first attempt to teach from biblical types, please try to keep the following principles in mind:

1) Use Simpler Types. Begin with the simpler types, in which the implication is very obvious.

2) Keep To Broader Interpretation. Never try to interpret every tiny detail of the type. Keep to the broader outline of the truth.

3) Don't Be Dogmatic. Avoid being dogmatic as to what the type teaches.

4) Illustrate Doctrine. Never base your doctrinal position on the teaching of types. Types should illustrate doctrine, not initiate it.

5) Be Open To Correction. Remain open to correction from those of greater maturity than yourself.

4. EXPOSITORY

By this method, we endeavour to expound the meaning and truth contained in a particular passage of Scripture. We seek to bring out the truth which is often hidden beneath the words on the page. This is an excellent method of teaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27)

You may take a book of the Bible and explain the meaning of it chapter by chapter. Perhaps you may take one chapter each week - and go through it verse by verse, explaining the significance and truth as you go. This may develop into a series of Bible studies that may take weeks or months to complete.

Thus, over a period of years, your congregation will become familiar with every part of the Bible, and be exposed to all the truth God wants to convey to them for their enrichment and spiritual equipping.

5. BIOGRAPHICAL

A biography is a life story of a person. Therefore, this method involves the study of the lives of the many characters we encounter in the Bible. Every biography recorded in the Bible holds important significance for us. Every life has something to teach us.

The study of Bible characters is very enthralling and absorbing. Choose a particular person. Read every reference to that person that occurs in the Bible. Make notes of every thought that comes to mind.

Begin to assemble those thoughts into chronological order - the order in which they occurred:

- Study the birth of the person.
- Consider the circumstances of his/her upbringing.
- Focus upon the dealings of God in his life.
- How did he react to God's dealing?
- What did he learn from it?
- If he were a success in life, what made him successful?
- If his life ended in failure, where did he go wrong?
- What can we learn from his life?

These are all interesting and informative things we can learn from the rich lives of the men and women we meet in the Bible.

6. ANALYTICAL

This type of sermon relates to the detailed analysing of a subject in order to extract the greatest amount of truth from it. From this truth, you can then teach the underlying principles involved.

7. ALLEGORICAL (to reason from a similar or parallel case)

Much of the teaching of Jesus was in the form of allegories or parables. He taught truth from a parallel case. The writers of the bible often use a natural subject from which to teach a spiritual truth. It involves the comparison of similar functions, and the process of reasoning from parallel cases. The allegorical sermon endeavours to communicate truth contained in an parable.

Chapter Two

The Textual Sermon

I would like us to examine more closely the preparation of a textual type of sermon. I have previously defined this method as an analysis and exposition of a brief portion of Scripture, usually a single verse or a brief statement.

A. ADVANTAGES OF HAVING A TEXT

1. It Captures Interest

The announcement of an interesting text immediately captures the interest of your audience, thus giving you an attentive congregation. They are intrigued to see how you will deal with it. They want to know what thoughts and implications you will bring forth out of your text. The minds of your listeners are stimulated and alerted, affording you an interested congregation.

2. Prevents Wandering

A specific text helps to prevent the preacher from wandering from his subject. It is difficult for an audience to retain active interest in a speaker who wanders too much in his presentation.

Having a particular text - and a context from which you have taken your subject - helps to avoid such wanderings and to retain the active interest of your hearers.

3. Keeps Sermon Biblical

Centring your talk on a specific portion of Scripture helps to keep you (the preacher) biblical. Having presented a text directly from the Bible, your message is obviously biblically-based. The tendency is then to substantiate your theme from other relevant parts of the Bible.

Conversely, if your announced topic is other than a biblical one - whether it be psychological, social, cultural, etc. - then the substantiation for your theme will generally be obtained from a similar source. That is not good. We are commanded to "*Preach the Word!*" (2 Tim 4:2).

4. Increases Boldness

Preaching directly from the Bible increases the boldness and authority of the proclamation. When you specifically preach the Word of God, there is a special anointing of the Spirit upon it. God anoints His Word.

Statements taken directly from the Bible can be presented with great feeling and conviction. This is because you are not presenting your own ideas; you are telling the people what God has to say on the matter. It carries enormous

weight and authority when you declare, "The Bible says!" and then read or share the verse and give the meaning.

It was when the disciples went forth "preaching the Word" that God worked with them, confirming the Word with signs following. The Lord "*worked with the word*" (Mark 16:20).

5. Aids Recall Of Message

A good text helps to fix the message in the minds of your listeners. They will remember it long afterwards. When they recall your message, it will frequently be the Scripture on which you based your talk which will be remembered most vividly.

B. CHOOSING A TEXT

1. Read The Bible Regularly

If you wish to become a capable and effective preacher, you must read your Bible regularly. Determine to develop good habits in respect to Bible reading. Have a special time each day to read the Bible. Carry a small Bible with you so that, if you have spare moments, you can spend them profitably in reading the Scriptures.

2. Study The Bible

Do not merely read it superficially. Dig beneath the surface. Meditate diligently on the things that you read. Toss them around in your mind. Look at them from every point of view. Practice analysing what you study. Take it apart in your mind and put it together again.

Learn to "ruminate," which means to "chew the cud." When a cow feeds, it chews the grass, swallows it, and then brings it back from the stomach to the mouth to chew on again.

So when you ruminate in your mind, you keep bringing the thoughts back to think about them again. Meditate on them. Ponder over them. Keep bringing them back to mind for further and deeper consideration.

The more your mind is filled with the Word of God and biblical meditations, the more you will have to draw upon when you stand to minister. "*The Holy Spirit will bring all things to your remembrance*" (John 14:26), but you must have them in your mind for Him to do so.

3. Always Have A Notebook With You

Whenever you read your Bible, get into the habit of having pen and paper with you. Form the good habit of making brief notes of every bit of inspiration you receive. Try to avoid doing this on loose pieces of paper, as you will tend to lose these. If you use a notebook, it will become like a spiritual diary. Months

afterwards you will be able to go back over your notes and draw fresh inspiration from them. The more you meditate on them, the more revelation you will receive. This will also create a file of thoughts on numerous subjects, from which you will be able to prepare many fine sermons at the appropriate time.

4. Maintain A Prayerful Attitude

This does not mean that you must be on your knees all the time. It is the attitude of heart to which I refer, not the posture of your body.

Ideally, prayer is a spiritual conversation with God. It is a two-way conversation. You speak to God, but He will also speak to you. As you learn to discern His voice, you will discover a continuing flow of inspiration.

God longs to reveal His truth. He waits for hungry, attentive hearts who can recognise and discern His voice. He wants to share His secrets with you.

5. Seek The Holy Spirit's Illumination

Place a high value and priority on the illumination the Spirit can bring upon the Word of God. The Holy Spirit is a Sensitive Person Who can be grieved and driven away.

You must cultivate the quiet, humble, sensitive spirit with which He loves to associate. As your fellowship with the Holy Spirit develops, He will introduce you to many wonderful new truths which will enrich your life and ministry.

6. Your Text Should Be:

a. Biblically Authoritative. It should harmonise with what the consensus of the Bible teaches. It is possible to take a verse out of its context, and teach from it something which the Bible does not substantiate. It has been said that "a text without a context is merely a pretext."

Always study your text in the light of its context. Never try to make your text say anything which is not confirmed by the verses which precede and follow it. Always endeavour to interpret your text in the light of what the whole Bible teaches on the subject.

b. Complete. Your text should always form a complete statement of truth. Some preachers merely take a phrase from a verse and use it, regardless of context. This is dishonest! It is called "*handling the word of God deceitfully*" (2 Cor 4:2). This must be avoided at all costs. It will lead to a dishonest and unbiblical treatment of your subject. In consequence, you will be misled and will mislead your hearers.

c. Reasonably Brief. A textual sermon should be founded on a reasonable, brief statement of Scripture.

d. Comprehensive. Although brief, your text should also be comprehensive. It should be a brief but adequate summary of what you wish to share.

When you read your text to the congregation, they should then gain a reasonable idea of the area of truth you are going to present. You should then seek to remain within the boundaries of what your text announces.

C. YOUR APPROACH TO THE TEXT

1. Thoroughly Digest Its Words

Read the text over many times. Ponder it in your heart. Meditate on it. Memorise it. Speak it out to yourself. Become thoroughly familiar with it.

2. Determine Its Language

Is it to be taken literally, or is it intended to be figurative? Does the writer mean what he says in a literal sense, or are his words to be taken as a figure of speech?

3. Analyse Its Message

It will help you greatly to dissect the verse. Separate it into three or four main parts. Discover exactly how much this verse contains and what it has to teach.

4. Investigate The Words

Try to discover what the words were originally meant to convey.

If you are fortunate enough to have a Greek or Hebrew lexicon, look up the word in the original language of Hebrew or Greek. Is there some special significance attached to it? Did the writer have a special reason for using THAT word? This study will help you understand any special application the writer may have wished to convey.

5. Discover Its Development

What line of truth was the writer seeking to develop? What was he ultimately trying to convey? How does he accomplish this?

Try to follow his lead and develop it in a similar fashion.

6. Consider Its Context

a. Biblical Context. What do the preceding and following verses say? Consider the verse in relation to the whole chapter from which it comes. Consider it in the light of the whole Gospel or Epistle in which you find it.

Make sure your understanding of it is faithful to the overall truth conveyed in the book. To do this, you must study the basic theme and premise of the book.

b. Cultural Context. Did the culture of that time influence what was written? Would the people to whom the words were originally written gain a different view of what was said than we would in our situation? If so, what would be the equivalent significance now?

c. Historic Context. When was this statement written? Did what was transpiring at that time influence what was written? Do events at the time of writing have specific bearing on what was said?

d. Geographic Context. Where was the writer when he wrote these words? Where were the people to whom he wrote? Does their geographical location have any bearing on what was said?

e. Total Biblical Context. *"All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God"* (2 Tim 3:16). Each part must be faithfully interpreted to agree with the whole.

No Scripture should be removed from its context; it must be interpreted by what the whole revelation of the entire Scripture teaches. Scripture must interpret Scripture, and our exposition of one text should always agree with what the Bible as a whole teaches.

D. ARRANGING YOUR MATERIAL

The orderly arrangement of material is a distinct advantage, both to the preacher and to those who will hear him. For the preacher, it affords the clearest grasp of his subject. His thoughts are not muddled or confused. It also helps him to ensure the most adequate treatment of the subject.

As for his audience, it will obviously assist them greatly in their grasp and comprehension of the sermon.

1. What An Outline Does For You

A good outline is the best and simplest way to organise your material.

a. It make you carefully analyse your subject and the material you have gathered. In doing this, you ultimately select only the best of your material.

b. It reveals any weak areas in your treatment of the subject and the development of your presentation.

c. It enables you to get the most out of your material, because you reduce it to its most relevant and essential substance.

d. It makes it easier for you to remember all you want to say, and to present it in a progressive and orderly fashion, with the least obvious dependence on your written notes.

e. It makes it easier for your listeners to follow the development of your presentation, because it is communicated in the most orderly and logical fashion.

2. Concerning Your Notes

a. Keep Them Brief. Train yourself to use the "skeleton-type" notes which you can take in at a glance.

b. Make Them Orderly. You need to be able to follow them easily at all times.

c. Let Them Be Comprehensive. Endeavour to cover every aspect on which you intend to speak

d. Concentrate On Ideas. Condense your thoughts into brief sentences. Learn to crystallise your thoughts and express them in simple sentences. Practice reducing and expressing a concept in one sentence.

e. Make Condensed Notes. Remember that the notes are there to prod your memory. Even one significant word can remind you of some instance you wish to recall and share with your audience.

f. Make Them Easier To Read. If you possess a typewriter, you may find typed notes easier to read. If not, then print your notes as clearly and legibly as possible. Never scribble out your notes so that you need to ponder over them in the pulpit in order to decipher what you have written.

E. THE STRUCTURE OF A TEXTUAL SERMON

The outline of your sermon will usually contain three major elements:

- **The Introduction**
- **The Main Statement Of Truth**
- **The Conclusion And Application**

Let us examine these in greater detail.

1. Introduction

Your introduction may well be the most important part of your message, for if you do not win your listeners' attention in this initial period, they may pay little attention to the remainder of your sermon.

The introduction often takes the form of a condensed version of your subject. You tell the listeners briefly what you plan to speak about and the area you intend to cover.

You may also explain just how you plan to treat this subject. In this manner, you endeavour to whet their appetites and make them keen to hear more.

a. What Your Introduction Should Accomplish:

1. Capture Interest. It should immediately capture the interest and imagination of your hearers.

- 2. Establish Rapport.** It should establish a rapport between you and your audience.
- 3. Afford Acceptance.** It should afford you an acceptance from them. You need to win their interest, confidence and esteem.
- 4. Inform.** It should inform them of what your subject is and how you intend to deal with it.
- 5. Convince.** It should convince them of the importance of your topic, and win their careful attention to the remainder of your talk.

Never open your introduction with an apology. Never say: "Unfortunately, I have not had sufficient time to prepare my sermon and I am afraid that it will not be a very good one!" If that is the case, the unfortunate people will find out soon enough. They will not need to be told! Such an apology will only lessen your own confidence in your abilities, and it will certainly not increase the people's confidence in you.

b. Characteristics Of A Good Introduction:

1) It Does Not Promise More Than You Can Deliver! Sometimes a preacher may make a most dramatic introduction to his sermon. He excites his audience for what is to come. He promises them a wonderful and enlightening exposition. If the message does not then reach the level he promised, it will be an anti-climax. His audience will be disappointed. They will also lose confidence in him.

2) It Should Not Be Too Sensational. Do not set a pace which is impossible for you to maintain. Rather, let your introduction be modest, and then your audience will be pleasantly surprised when they discover the sermon to be much more interesting than they anticipated.

3) It Should Not Be Too Long. Remember, this is only your introduction, not the sermon.

4) It Should Bear Obvious Relationship To Your Theme. The introduction should lead into your theme, so it must always be vitally related to your subject. It may be a condensed version of the subject matter you intend to share. It may be a story which illustrates the truth of what you plan to say.

5) It Should Be Carefully Prepared. Since your introduction is vitally important in winning the attention of your hearers, it surely deserves careful thought and preparation.

Try to put yourself in the place of your audience. Ask yourself: What would successfully gain my attention? Of all that I propose to say, which particular aspect would really capture my interest? By using your imagination in this manner, you can determine the best style your introduction should take.

6) It Should Provide A Natural Transition Into Your Theme. When properly presented, it should not be obvious to your listeners just where the introduction concludes and the sermon begins.

This is applicable to all your message. It should not be in several distinct sections or points. All points should relate to the central theme or text.

2. The Main Body Of Your Message

I would suggest that you divide the main part of your subject matter into three major sections. These sections need not all be the same length. There should be a natural, logical and smooth progression from one point to the next.

These divisions do not have to be obvious when you present them. Try to avoid saying, "Now, my third point is...." Perhaps the sections might take a form like this:-

A. STATE THE TRUTH

1. *Declare It*
2. *Explain It*
3. *Clarify It.*

B. AMPLIFY THE TRUTH

1. *Develop It*
2. *Substantiate It*
3. *Prove It*

C. CLIMAX

1. *Present Your Conclusion*
2. *What May We Learn From This?*
3. *How May We Practically Apply It?*

3. Conclusion

Appeal to the mind. Summarise your talk. Restate it briefly. Appeal to the will. Seek to persuade. Appeal to the emotions. Try to motivate.

F. HOW TO PREPARE YOUR SERMON

1. Prepare A Rough Plan First

An outline affords the most effective means of properly organising your material. Once you master the art of producing a good outline, you will find it much easier and more convenient to organise your talk.

As you begin to examine and evaluate your subject material, write down every thought on a large piece of paper. Don't worry at this stage about getting

things into their correct sequence. Simply write down every valid thought that occurs to you as you consider the subject.

2. Select Your Main Thoughts

It is generally easier to find three main thoughts.

- What are the three most important statements you have written on that large sheet of paper? Get them into a natural sequence.
- Which statement should come first?
- What is the foundation statement which needs to be laid?

Make it your **number one heading**. WRITE IT OUT IN CAPITAL LETTERS AND UNDERLINE IT!

Now ask yourself: "Which statement naturally follows on from the first?" Make that **main heading number two**. Now you are left with one more main thought which should be a conclusion of the matter. This will now be **main heading number three**.

Set them out on paper like this:

1. MAIN HEADING NUMBER ONE

- a. *Minor heading.*
- b. *Minor heading.*
- c. *Minor heading.*

2. MAIN HEADING NUMBER TWO

- a. *Minor heading.*
- b. *Minor heading.*
- c. *Minor heading.*

3. MAIN HEADING NUMBER THREE

- a. *Minor heading.*
- b. *Minor heading.*
- c. *Minor heading.*

Now begin to go through the rest of your material on your ROUGH PLAN. Get those thoughts into order under the particular headings you have designated. Let each of these be placed under the appropriate main heading: 1, 2, 3. Each thought then becomes a "minor heading." Designate them a, b, c etc.

All your thoughts and material are now coming into an orderly arrangement. This makes it easier for you to study the subject further.

3. Sermon Examples

a. Example 1. Allow me to illustrate this method from one of the best known verses in the Bible, John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

INTRODUCTION

The world has known many people who are said to be great lovers. But I want to speak about the One Who is, without doubt, THE greatest lover of all. It is God Himself!

He loves the greatest number of people, with the highest quality of love, which prompted Him to make the greatest possible sacrifice.

1. GOD'S GREAT LOVE FOR THE WHOLE WORLD

- a. He created the world and all mankind
- b. He loves every person in the world equally
- c. He wants every one of them to live in His Kingdom eternally.

2. LOVE CAUSED HIM TO GIVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON

- a. How precious the Son is to God the Father. No earthly father ever loved his son so much.
- b. How great was God's sacrifice!
- c. God gave Jesus freely for whosoever (everyone in the world)
- d. He gave Him to die to pay the penalty for our sin and guilt.

3. WHOEVER RECEIVES CHRIST NEED NOT PERISH

- a. This wonderful offer is available to all.
- b. God loves even the worst of men.
- c. Salvation is a free gift through faith in Jesus.

CONCLUSION

God now offers you the greatest possible gift...eternal life in Christ! How foolish you would be to reject or neglect so wonderful a gift. Accept Christ now without delay!

b. Example 2. Now, let us consider a simple narrative from the Gospels. In Luke 8:41-48, we find the story of a woman who, after twelve years of chronic suffering, came to Christ and was immediately healed. She went away healed and with a deep peace in her heart and mind.

Our text could be a phrase from verse 48: **"GO IN PEACE."** (This could also be the title of your message!)

INTRODUCTION

Surely every person desires to possess inner peace and security. There are many factors in life which may rob us of such peace. One of these is sickness. It is difficult to maintain inner peace when one is plagued by serious illness. The mind is filled with uncertainty and despair.

Here is a story of just such a person. She has been sick for twelve years. Though she had visited many doctors, none had been able to help her. In fact she even became worse.

Then one glorious day, she met Jesus Christ. Through this wonderful encounter, she was instantly healed of her long-standing sickness. She was also blessed with a deep sense of inner peace.

This same Jesus can also bless your life today. Let us look into this story, and discover how she received her healing - and how you too can be healed!

1. THIS WOMAN HAD NO PEACE

- a. She had been constantly ill for twelve years.
- b. She had spent all her money. Now she was penniless!
- c. She was disappointed and frustrated.
- d. She was tempted to despair. It seemed that none could help her. How typical she is of so many today who are lonely, frustrated and insecure.

2. HOW SHE CAME TO CHRIST

- a. She heard what He had done for someone else.
- b. She determined that she, too, would seek His healing.
- c. She encouraged herself in faith. She said within herself: *"If I can but touch the border of His garment, I shall be healed"* (Mark 5:28).
- d. She overcame many obstacles.
- e. She came to Christ
- f. She touched Him by faith.
- g. His life flowed into her. Immediately she was made whole!

3. HER SALVATION

- a. The disciples could not help her. They did not even know her need. There are times when no human being can help us. Only God is able to meet our deepest needs.
- b. Christ required her confession. *"Who touched me?"* He already knew who had touched Him, but He wanted her public confession. Romans 10:10 says: *"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."*
- c. Christ called her *"daughter."* He accepted her as a member of God's family.

d. He told her to "*Go in peace.*" From that moment, she knew real peace. Uncertainty and anxiety were banished, and the peace of God filled her heart and mind.

e. It was her faith which made her whole (Luke 8:48). God desires everyone to be whole: perfectly sound in spirit, soul and body.

CONCLUSION

She went away a transformed person. You too can be transformed if you come to Christ in faith!

4. Summary

Practice dissecting and analysing such incidents from the Bible. Try to discover the three main thoughts or sections of the story.

Once you have determined the three main thoughts, begin to analyse each of them separately and break them down into their component parts.

There may be four or five smaller truths within each main statement. Analyse the various parts. Get them into sequence and order. Then, arrange them progressively. This is excellent practice for you. It may not come easily at first, but persevere. Determine to master it. After a while, it will become easier for you.

I often liken the construction of a sermon to the building of a house:-

- · The introduction is like a path leading up to the house. It takes you from the front gate to the door by which you may enter.
- · Each main heading is like a room in the house.
- · The minor headings are the furnishings in each room.
- · Illustrations are windows built into each room to throw light on the furnishings in that room. (Illustrations are simple examples which help us to understand profound truths.)
- · Keep this analogy in mind when you are preparing your sermons.

Chapter Three

Expository Preaching

Here, we deal with the art of expounding a passage of Scripture. To expound means to interpret and explain; to set forth a matter in detail.

For example, you may decide to go through the Gospel of John, chapter by chapter. Commencing with the first chapter, you would seek to interpret and explain the meaning and significance of it, verse by verse.

You might deal with one chapter each week - and thus, over a period of weeks, finally go through the whole book.

A. ADVANTAGES OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

This is an excellent method of teaching the Bible. It has many distinct advantages, and is a good style to cultivate. Here are some of the obvious advantages of this method:

1. It Is A Biblical Method

Jesus Himself frequently used this method. He would take a portion of the Old Testament Scripture and interpret the meaning of it to His hearers.

Peter also used this method on the Day of Pentecost. He took some of the Old Testament Scriptures referring to King David, and explained the true meaning of them to the crowd. He carefully showed the prophetic implications of those Scriptures and how they pointed to Christ, and proved Him to be the Messiah. Again, we find Stephen using this method of expository preaching in Acts 7. The Bible is filled with fine examples of expository preaching.

2. It Produces Bible Preachers and Bible-Oriented Congregations

Expounding the Scriptures ensures that there is plenty of Bible content in your ministry. As you proceed through a chapter, verse by verse, your congregation is being filled with the Word of God.

3. It Invites Holy Spirit Reinforcement. - The Holy Spirit anoints the Word

The Spirit of God always agrees with the Word of God (1 Jn 5:7). Therefore, the more Bible content we preach, the more of the Spirit's anointing there will be upon the proclamation. The Holy Spirit delights to confirm the Word of God. He does so many times with signs and wonders (Mark 16:20).

4. It Encourages Deeper Interest In The Bible

The more of the Bible you share with people, the more hungry they become for it. They will soon begin to study it for themselves at deeper levels. Their lives will be transformed. They will be strengthened and reinforced by the Word. You will have a Bible-oriented church.

B. SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

1. Carefully Choose An Appropriate Passage Of Scripture

Make sure the passage is one which will minister life and strength to your hearers. Do not choose a subject merely because it interests or intrigues you. Never select a subject which may introduce dispute, division and strife.

You are seeking to be a channel for God, that He might speak His Word to His people through you. You are therefore responsible to get the mind of God for the people over whom He has given you responsibility. This ministry is one of the greatest privileges given to mortal man. It is also one of the most awesome responsibilities!

2. Seek A Theme Relevant To The People's Present Situation

God always has "present truth" that He wants to speak to His people.

2 Pet 1:12

12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.
(KJV)

There is constant progression and development of God's purposes among His people. He has a specific purpose for each body of believers.

Every congregation should be moving forward in the particular purpose of God that He has defined for them. In order to accomplish this, it is essential that His specific word of truth is ministered to them consistently.

It is sometimes a useful exercise to ask yourself: "If this were to be my last chance to speak to this people, what is the most important thing they need to hear?"

Preaching with this kind of thought in mind helps you. It will ensure that your topics are relevant and vital to the development and maturing of the people in the purposes that God has for them.

3. Study The Passage Carefully From Every Angle

Read it through several times until you begin to become very familiar with it. Then study it carefully, verse by verse. Whenever there is an obvious link with some other passage of Scripture, read that portion as well.

If you have access to any reference books, then by all means read them. But above all, keep your mind open and alert to the Holy Spirit, to glean whatever thoughts He may share with you.

4. Endeavour To Thoroughly Understand Your Theme

Always seek to discover the underlying theme of the passage. What was the Holy Spirit wanting to convey when He inspired this passage? What is at the very heart of this teaching? What is it that God would say to His people through this?

5. Have A Definite Objective In Mind

Your objective should be in complete harmony with God's objective. Having discovered what you sense He is wanting to communicate through this Scripture, your task is to be as faithful to that as possible. So, you need to soak yourself in this message.

It is not sufficient to mentally comprehend what God is saying. You need to feel what He is feeling. He wants to communicate His heart as well as His mind. So His Word must flow through your heart and well as your mind.

You are to be God's instrument to convincingly relay His message to His people. You are His mouthpiece!

You are not called to share YOUR mind with the people. You are called to share HIS mind with them. This awareness should be your motivating factor. It should be the compelling reason for your preaching.

6. Speak From Your Own Experience

In order for you to effectively communicate truth, it should be something which God has worked out in your own life first.

Many preachers present theories. They preach platitudes which sometimes have no practical relevance. No man can convincingly preach a "born-again experience" unless he has experienced it himself.

You must know the experience as a reality in your own life before you can effectively share it with others. The preacher is called to be a living epistle. He is not only required to preach the truth, he is also required to practice and demonstrate it. He is to be a living example of all he preaches.

7. Make It Meaningful

Exegesis means "to bring out the true meaning." You are responsible to ensure, to the best of your ability, that the true meaning and significance of the Scripture becomes clear to your listeners.

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Always endeavour to make your subject simple. This is obviously what Jesus did. This was an important reason why His ministry was so powerful and effective. He took profound issues and made them so simple.

Many modern preachers do the very opposite. They take the simplest subjects and make them so profound and complicated that their audience understands little of what they hear. Remember this: the simpler, the better!

8. Make It Practical

Always try to clearly show the practical applications your message may have for the people. A grave danger among Christians is often "too much knowledge, too little practice."

Many Christians have listened to sermons for years. Yet there is little change in their lives or practical expression of the teaching.

Do not be content to merely speak to people. Make your conclusions abundantly clear. Endeavour to make practical suggestions as to how the people may meaningfully respond to God.

Follow up your messages with practical programs in which people may become involved in order to be doers of the Word and not hearers only!

C. GATHERING RELEVANT MATERIAL

In addition to studying the passage of Scripture, how do we collect additional relevant material? Here are a few questions to ask yourself:

1. What Have I Ever Heard Or Read On This Subject?

Begin to stir up your memory. Perhaps you once read a good book on this subject. What was the book? What did it say on this matter? Push your memory until the thoughts come back to your conscious mind.

Perhaps you once heard someone preach on this subject. What was said? How was it presented? Frequently something that was said will become a seed-thought in your mind. From this, a whole train of new thoughts will come.

2. What Has The Holy Spirit Ever Shown Me On This Subject?

This is where the benefit of keeping a notebook is realised. Sometimes months or even years previously, God had given you some interesting thoughts and insights on this very theme. If you did not write down those thoughts, you may have a problem recalling them again.

But if you have a notebook in which your devotional thoughts are recorded, you can go back to it again to familiarise your mind with what the Spirit showed you then.

If you have not been keeping such a book, get away somewhere quietly so your mind can dwell on the subject without interruptions. Meditation will help you recall those things you were taught by the Spirit.

3. What Have I Ever Observed that Relates To This Theme?

Frequently, we have observed things which throw light on the subject we are considering. We may recall incidents from our experience which illustrate some aspect of truth we are now considering.

Sometimes it is a thing we have observed in nature which confirms a principle we are studying in the Word of God. Illustrations from nature often bring tremendous light to a Scripture. African preachers are usually very adept at this. I have often been thrilled listening to an African preacher illustrating Bible truth from those things he has learned about nature. The God of nature is also the God of the Bible!

4. What Thoughts Have I Ever Had On This Subject?

Many of our previous thoughts on a given subject are now buried in the subconscious mind. They need to be brought to the surface again. This can often be accomplished in a time of deep meditation.

As we sit quietly, focusing our minds on the Bible, buried thoughts will float to the surface again. I often tell my students: "Push your memory; make it work. You will not damage it by making it work for you. You can only improve it." Never be afraid to do this.

Sit and concentrate. **Will** to remember what your thoughts were. Refresh your mind with them again.

5. Who Or What Can I Consult On This Subject?

Discussing a biblical topic with a fellow preacher is always a stimulating and valuable experience. If you have opportunity to do this, then seize that chance! It will be edifying and enlightening for all concerned.

This kind of exercise should take place every time preachers are together. Engaging in discussion on edifying Bible subjects would do a tremendous amount of good and foster true fellowship and unity. I feel very sad for many of my minister friends who have no reference books. But they do have each other!

Share your knowledge and experience with each other. Pool your Bible knowledge through good discussion and frequent conversation. Don't waste those golden opportunities when you come together.

D. PREPARATION OF YOUR MATERIAL

Having found a suitable, relevant passage, deal with it as follows:

1. Be Open-Minded About It.

Put aside your preconceived ideas on the subject. Let your mind be open and unbiased to receive and learn something new.

Someone has said that if we really want to grow spiritually, then we must read all those parts of the Bible which we have NEVER underlined.

Frequently, we have firmly established concepts; and we tend to see only those things which confirm what we already believe. We must approach God's Word with openness and honesty. Don't nullify or make of "no effect" the Word of God because your religious tradition has shut off your mind to anything other than what you presently believe (see Mark 7:13).

You certainly do not have the sum total of all the knowledge God wants to impart to you. Be ready to learn whatever new truth God may have to share with you.

2. Investigate It Thoroughly

Analyse the passage. Interrogate it! Take it apart and examine it thoroughly. Do this with your mind open to the Holy Spirit. Anticipate fresh thought and revelation from God. Expect to discern truth which you have never noticed before.

The Word of God is like a mine shaft. The deeper you go, the more precious the deposits you find. Many people are content to dig around the surface. Their conclusions are always superficial. They are able to share only what others already know.

A secret of effective teaching is to investigate those areas of truth which have not previously occurred to people. In this way, you can share fresh and refreshing truth with them.

3. Do Some Original Thinking About It

Do not let your mind stay in the ruts you have created. Trust the Holy Spirit to illuminate your mind. I am sure He will share something with you that you have never known before.

Check it out with the rest of the Bible. No "truth" ever contradicts the whole body of truth revealed in the Scriptures. Check it too, with a fellow preacher - one who knows more about the Bible than you do, and not one that you know will always agree with you!

Do not be afraid to have some original thought. Let the wind of the Spirit blow the cobwebs from your mind!

4. Approach It Creatively

God is a Creator. His Word is a creative Word. Everything which God made, He created by His Word! The Word of God should not be bound. It is still a

creative and powerful Word. When released into redeemed hearts, it will create and transform.

Always be aware of the creative potential of God's Word. Handle it with an attitude of faith and expectancy. Always be mindful that it is filled with creative ability.

It has far more energy and ability than you will ever understand. It is always capable of producing far more than you could comprehend.

Remember, it is a miracle Word. God is in His Word. His creative genius is in it. Your ministry should be aimed at releasing this creative ability into the lives of your hearers.

5. Treat It Constructively

Remember that you are a labourer together with God. You are involved in CONSTRUCTING something, not destroying it. Your task, under God, is to build up the Body of Christ. Therefore your messages should be constructive, not destructive.

Sometimes your emphasis may be very searching. The word you deliver may bring your listeners to heart-searching and repentance. Their reaction may be broken-ness and tears, but they should not be left like that!

Consider Ezra and Nehemiah (Neh 8:5-12). God had delivered a very heavy word to the returned exiles. As they listened to the exposition of the Law, they realised how far they had got away from it during their years of exile.

This caused them to weep, bowing their faces to the ground in repentance. The prophets allowed them to do this for a while. They then interrupted their weeping and mourning and got the people on their feet again.

They said: *"...go...eat...and drink...neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength"* (vs 10)

Do not constantly bring the people under condemnation. Your ultimate goal is to see them built up, strengthened and edified. To accomplish this, you must minister constructively.

6. Study It Comparatively

Scripture must be compared with Scripture. It must always be interpreted within the total context of the Bible. This demands a maturity of understanding of the whole Bible.

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You must study the Bible consistently *"to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly 'applying' the word of truth"* (2 Tim 2:15 pph).

7. Conclude It Practically

All effective Bible preaching and teaching must have a practical conclusion and application. Ministry is not merely to inform the mind, but rather to form the life. You should always have a practical conclusion to make. Suggest to your audience some meaningful response. People need to respond to the word you have brought.

E. DELIVERING THE EXPOSITORY MESSAGE

1. Turn to the Passage

Have your congregation turn to the appropriate passage in the Bible.

2. Read the Passage Aloud

If you plan to expound a particular chapter, read it out to the people. Perhaps the congregation may share the reading with you, each one reading out a verse or two.

3. Introduce Your Theme

Explain how you intend to deal with it. Explain your purpose and intention, so that the people may co-operate with you. They then will understand where you are heading and will be able to follow along with you.

Read the Passage Aloud Again

You may then decide to read the chapter through again, one verse at a time, making a suitable commentary on each verse.

F. SEVEN PRINCIPLES

At this point, I would like to introduce to you seven vital principles which are extremely important, particularly in expository preaching. Remember them, and seek to cover them whenever you expound the Word of God.

1. Clarity

Make sure that your commentary is easily understood. Do not try to be too profound or mysterious. The aim of effective expository preaching is to make the relevant passage as easy to understand as possible.

Don't try to be clever or to display your knowledge. Try to break the Bread of Life in such a way that your entire audience is able to easily follow the emphasis you are making.

2. Consistency

Keep your comments consistent with the theme you are expounding. Avoid the temptation to wander off down various devious pathways which may occur to you. By keeping faithful to your subject, you reinforce it in the minds of your audience.

Do not be afraid of some repetition. A certain amount of it is necessary in order to fix a truth into the hearts of the people.

3. Coherence

To "cohere" means to hold together. So be sure your thoughts have a clear unity. A person speaking incoherently is one whose speech is lacking in unity. It is often impossible to connect to the point he is trying to make.

Let the expression of your thoughts have obvious unity. Do not wander from thought to thought. Be clear and concise. Make sure your thoughts have cohesion and hold together well, each supporting and complementing the other.

4. Continuity

There should also be a clear progression of thought. Your statements should be continually moving your audience towards the proposed objective. Each point should follow clearly the previous one.

Your comments should flow freely from one to the next, with unity and clear development and progression. Keep moving forward smoothly to your ultimate goal.

5. Concise

Aim to be brief. It is far better to have your audience wishing that you would continue, than to have them wishing you had finished twenty minutes previously.

Avoid the temptation to speak for the sake of speaking. Don't get into the habit of rambling on. It only confuses your audience. A good piece of advice was once offered to preachers in this form:

STAND UP! SPEAK UP! SHUT UP!

6. Comprehensive

This point may seem to contradict the previous one in which I advised brevity. To be comprehensive means to cover the subject as fully as possible. But there is no contradiction.

It is certainly possible and desirable to cover a subject comprehensively and yet as briefly as possible.

Being comprehensive does not necessitate speaking at so great a length that your audience becomes tired of the sound of your voice. Try to balance the two!

7. Conclusive

Here is the most important point. What is the conclusion of all you have said? What is the end result? What will your words achieve?

The desired conclusion should dominate your mind from the commencement. You should be moving relentlessly towards it. Minister in faith, expecting God to bring to pass His desired objective.

Remember that it is not your responsibility to achieve the desired result. That is God's task. You must keep looking to God, not to the people. Confidently expect Him to give the increase.

Chapter Four

THE BIOGRAPHICAL SERMON

A. ADVANTAGES OF THE BIOGRAPHICAL SERMON

I have intimated previously that this type of sermon relates primarily to teaching from the lives and examples of Bible characters. It entails the detailed study of such characters in order to learn as much as possible from their lives.

An interesting feature of the Bible is the manner in which the men and women who form the narrative are presented just as they are. There is no attempt to cover up their weaknesses and reveal only their strengths and virtues.

Many of the great heroes of the Bible have their human flaws. We are very much aware that they are flesh and blood as we are. They faced temptations common to all men; frequently, their response was little different from that of the average Christian today.

In all the narrative of Bible history, there is only one truly perfect man - the man Christ Jesus! Even the great heroes of faith are manifestly human. This certainly helps us identify with them.

The art of expounding truths learned from studying the lives of these men and women is an extremely valuable one. It is a style of preaching which may be used to great effect by a pastor.

1. It Deals With Realities Of Life

It deals with the realities of human life, with its strengths and weaknesses. We can frequently learn so much from the struggles, triumphs and failures of those who have gone before us.

2. They Are Examples From which To Learn

They are examples for our benefit - that we might learn from them, rather than from our own painful experience.

B. HOW TO BEGIN

1. Choose Characters From The Bible

You could begin this style of preaching by studying some of the great characters of the Bible such as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Paul and Peter.

These are men whose deeds illuminate the history of God's dealings with mankind. There is SO MUCH to learn from their lives. There are many great women in the Bible too, whose lives have a special message to convey.

2. Study Their Lives

Begin by reading the narrative which tells of the birth of the person. Find out the meaning of his or her name for most Bible names have tremendous significance. Study the circumstances of his or her upbringing. Pay special attention to the purpose of God in his or her life.

- a. What did God want to accomplish through him (or her)?
- b. How did He make His purpose known?
- c. What was the reaction of the person?
- d. What can we learn from the dealings of God in his (or her) life?
- e. Are there some dangers we should be aware of?
- f. What was the secret of his (or her) success?
- g. What was the conclusion of his (or her) life?

C. EXAMPLE OF A BIOGRAPHICAL SERMON

There are so many lessons we can learn from these great characters.

1. The Life Of David

Let us look briefly into the life of David to give a simple example of a biographical sermon.

TITLE: "DAVID, A MAN AFTER GOD'S HEART" (Acts 13:22).

INTRODUCTION

His name means "**Beloved of God.**" He is called a man after God's heart. Why did God call him this? What was it that appealed to God's heart? There is obviously much we can learn from this man!

1. A MAN AFTER GOD'S HEART

- a. David had a special place in God's heart
- b. It is wonderful that God finds such delight in an imperfect human being.

2. WAS NOT A PERFECT MAN

- a. His weakness became known to all. Yet this did not alter God's feeling about him.
- b. We too are far from perfect, yet God can find delight in us.

3. WAS A VERY 'HUMAN' PERSON

- a. Typical mixture of strengths and weaknesses
- b. Longed to please God, yet so often grieved Him.
- c. Longed for God's rule in his life, yet frequently did his own thing.
- d. Ascended to great heights... descended to sad depths.
- e. David was not a superman. He was truly human as we are!

4. CHOSEN FOR SPECIAL TASK

God chose him from among his older, outwardly more impressive brothers. Man is impressed with outward appearance but God looks on the heart. Some of God's finest servants are not outwardly impressive.

5. HE HAD TO BE TESTED

- a. Every person called of God must be tested and proven
- b. Jesus was tested in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11).
- c. *"Don't think it strange when you are tested"* (1 Peter 4:12).
- d. *"After you have suffered a while, God will make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you"* (1 Peter 5:10).

6. DAVID TESTED THROUGH BATHSHEBA (2 Sam 11)

- a. **He was spiritually "off guard"...**
Was now fifty years old... Had been king for 20 years. How easy to drop one's guard!
- b. **Was overly self-confident.** Never trust the arm of flesh!
- c. **Idle moments led to his downfall.** Should have been at the battle-front. Satan takes advantage of idle time.
- d. **Material prosperity bred sensuousness.** Paul disciplined his flesh to ensure he was not disapproved. (1 Cor 9:27).
- e. **Failed to overcome temptation while it was still in mind.** All temptation begins in thoughts. This is the easiest place to defeat it. Cast down thoughts and imaginations (2 Cor 10:5). Failure to do so may lead to disaster.

7. HIS REPENTANCE (Psalm 51:1-10).

- It was David's sincerity in repentance which endeared him to God.
- a. He acknowledged his transgressions. Did not try to blame someone else.
 - b. Repented thoroughly of his iniquity.
 - c. Sincerely sought forgiveness.
 - e. Cried out for cleansing.
 - f. Sought a clean heart and right spirit.

8. HIS SUFFERING (psalm 32:3,4; 77:2-6).

- a. Heavy conviction day and night
- b. Tears of remorse.
- c. Bones waxed old.

9. WHAT GOD SOUGHT TO ACCOMPLISH (Psalm 51:6, 10, 17).

- a. Truth in the inward parts
- b. Clean heart and right spirit
- c. Broken spirit and contrite heart

10. THAT HIS SERVANT MIGHT BE

- a. A meek and humble soul
- b. A truly joyful person
- c. Sustained by God's free spirit
- d. A man after God's own heart.

This is a brief and simple example of a biographical sermon. Determine to spend some time studying some of the great characters of the Bible so that you can teach important truths from their lives.

There are many things in the life of David that parallel our own lives. As we allow God to develop and equip us for the task to which He has called us there may be numerous things in the life of David and other bible characters from which we may all learn vital lessons. It is always a good thing if we are able to learn such lessons from the lives and mistakes of others. This may save us from having to experience similar testings in our own life.

Chapter Five

THE PREACHER

I mentioned previously that effective preaching is largely the product of two factors, one divine and the other human. Both are necessary - for "without man, God will not, and without God, man cannot." It is the human aspect with which we are dealing primarily in these studies.

A. PERSONALITY GUIDELINES

An elderly preacher was once asked by a group of younger ministers: "With regard to the human aspect of preaching, what is the most important factor?" His immediate reply was: "Personality!" "But tell us," they persisted, "what is personality?" "Ah," he said, "If only I knew!"

Preaching involves communicating divine truth through human personality. So the development and proper use of personality is important.

Someone has analysed effective public speaking (I refer to public speaking as distinct from preaching) in this manner:

An effective speech is composed of:

- subject matter 60%
- psychology of approach and conclusion 20%
- effective delivery 10%
- personality 10%

Yet, that 10 percent "leavens" the whole speech! It can make the difference between a boring talk and a fascinating speech. I have, therefore, felt it desirable to devote some space to the matter of preacher's personality. The following are some simple guidelines.

1. By Yourself

Be relaxed, natural and unaffected. One of the most important aids to effective speaking is to be relaxed.

Tension creates nervousness. Under tension, the memory does not function well. Speech does not flow fluently. Your nervousness will be communicated to the audience, and they too will feel tense.

The best way to relax is to commit your message to God. Do the best you can and leave the results to God.

2. Do Not Copy Others

God chose YOU because He wants to use YOU! You have some special features peculiar to you alone, and God has a purpose for them.

It is a great mistake to try to copy any other preacher. No matter how effective that person may be, it will not enhance your ministry to try to copy him. To do so would be like David trying to wear Saul's armor. It just did not fit him, and would have been more of a hindrance than a help (see 1 Samuel 17:38,39).

If you are endeavoring to copy or imitate someone, your listeners will quickly become aware of this. They will realise that your preaching is not wholly sincere and genuine. It communicates shallowness or superficiality.

You will never be completely relaxed and at ease if you are not yourself. Your ministry will be stilted and artificial. You can certainly learn from hearing and observing other preachers but nothing is gained from trying to copy them. Determine to be yourself, and be the best you can be!

3. Be True To Yourself

Integrity and honesty are essential for a preacher. You are a channel for God - a mouthpiece, that He might speak to people through you. Therefore, He wants a vessel which is honest, free from hypocrisy and guile.

4. Be A Clean Vessel

It is unlikely that your hearers will rise higher than you. If your life is polluted, you will pollute your hearers. If there is bitterness in your spirit, you will communicate it to your listeners.

If you are critical, this will come through your preaching, and your congregation will become critical too. If you allow yourself to be controlled by negative attitudes, the people will also become negative.

You will always reproduce after your kind (Gen 1:12,21).. You have a grave responsibility to BE the kind of person God wants to reproduce. The fruit of your ministry will be of that variety as well.

5. Be Sincere

Sincerity means to be free from pretence or deceit. It means to be the same person in reality as you are in appearance. Do not try to appear to be in public what you are not in private. Be genuine, honest and sincere.

Many preachers develop a public image. They have a religious facade. Please avoid this - it is a religious hypocrisy and an abomination to God. God

is certainly not impressed by such a false image and people are not fooled by it for very long either.

6. Have A Clear Purpose and Objective

The personality is properly shaped and developed when one has a real objective in life. If your life is truly dedicated to being an effective minister of God's Word, your personality will be developed to that end. It will take the shape best suited to a communication of truth.

Such dedication will foster the development of your personality in the best manner suitable to be a spokesman for God.

Do not allow preaching to be a hobby for you. It is the highest calling of God available to man. If God has called you to declare His glorious truth, devote yourself wholeheartedly to pursue the ultimate development of that calling. It is the most important thing in your life. Never allow it to be relegated to a secondary position.

7. Be Wholehearted

Nothing worthwhile is ever achieved by half-hearted people. Nothing of value is ever obtained without cost. Give yourself wholeheartedly to the great task of preaching.

Let this goal be uppermost in your mind. Study everything you can on the subject. Let it absorb and motivate you. Make it the most important thing in your life; determine to be, in every way, worthy of the high calling God has put upon you.

B. PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN PREACHING

1. Naturalness

Be relaxed and be yourself. God wants to use YOUR personality as a channel to communicate His Word. That is why He chose and called YOU. Do not be overly critical of yourself. Accept yourself. God has accepted you. No one can be YOU nearly as well as YOU!

2. Originality

Let your message and the manner in which you present it be your own unique product. God has made us different one from another. He enjoys our uniqueness and the variety this gives to the human race.

Use the unique personality God has given to you, and allow Him to express His mind through your life in the special and unique way He has desired..

3. Simplicity

There is something extremely attractive and appealing about simplicity. Don't try to be overly complicated or profound. You don't have to impress people. You are there to minister to them, not to impress them.

4. Attractiveness

I am convinced that the most winsome and attractive personality this world has ever seen is Jesus Christ!

I don't mean particularly in physical appearance. Isaiah said: "*...when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him*" (Isa 53:2).

The attractiveness of Christ was not primarily in His physical appearance. It was His character and personality that were so appealing.

The average people of His day responded to Him with great enthusiasm. The Bible says: "*...the common people heard him gladly*" (Mark 12:37).

They flocked to Him. They were drawn like steel filings to a magnet. There was a sweet graciousness about Him which gave Him an enormous appeal. It was partly this personal magnetism which drew large crowds wherever He went. The Holy Spirit can develop a similar attractiveness in you!

5. Spontaneity

Don't act unnaturally. Be free and unimpeded, doing things naturally. Spontaneity means that things happen easily without being forced or coerced. Don't develop a religious style which is heavy and unnatural. Let your style of communication flow freely and naturally. Don't let yourself be bound and restricted.

6. Adaptability

A good preacher must learn to be flexible and to adapt to many different circumstances.

Every gathering you preach in will be different in some way from others. You need to be able to discern in each situation what the Holy Spirit is desiring to accomplish.

God has a specific objective to achieve in every gathering of believers. The preacher is a very important key to the accomplishment of that purpose.

Try not to be too rigid or orthodox in your mental approach to a preaching occasion. Endeavor to keep your mind flexible and open. Learn how to wait on God continually in your spirit. Keep your spirit open to His still small voice

within you. This can make all the difference between a very ordinary church service and a dynamic encounter with God through His Word.

The Holy Spirit can create many different kinds of moods in the meetings. Sometimes they can be joyful and lively; at other times they will be quiet and reverent.

The skill to recognise this, and take advantage of the unique situation created by the Spirit, can enable you to reap the results desired by God.

The key to success in Christian service is to "discern the way in which God is moving and move with Him."

7. Dynamic

There is a mysterious dynamic in preaching which is quite unique to this particular function - a dynamic expression of authority which can be quite awesome to witness.

Peter illustrates this awesome dynamic on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Until this time, he had shown himself to be fearful and afraid. His cowardly denial of Christ had proven this. His refusal to acknowledge Christ even before a mere serving-maid reveals his timidity and insecurity.

But he was transformed on the Day of Pentecost. We see a very different Peter as he stood to preach that morning. There is something glorious to behold about this man as he fearlessly proclaims the Word of God to a vast crowd.

There is a majesty which thrills the soul as we witness such a preacher in action. Who can explain just what constitutes this phenomenon?

I clearly recall some of the times when I have been privileged to hear Dr. Billy Graham. What power and authority is released through the preaching of this man! It is a combination of the power of God and the co-operation of man.

Here is an example of how wonderfully a human being can become a channel for the wisdom and counsel of God to be brought to men.

Truly preaching is a high and holy task. A person called to this work must feel honoured indeed. Anyone called to fulfil this role should surely dedicate himself wholeheartedly to ensure the highest possible level of effectiveness.

C. VITAL EQUIPMENT

I would like to speak to you now about three things which are vital to effective preaching: VISION, VOCABULARY AND VOICE!

1. Vision

Every preacher need a vision. By this I mean a concept of what his ministry can achieve in God.

Our vision is that concept of the ultimate achievement towards which we move through life. You could say it is a dream of what you can ultimately be for God and the function you can fulfil to His glory.

Every preacher needs such a vision to motivate him. He needs a definite, ultimate goal to move towards - something to strive for, something to achieve; something for which it is worth sacrificing; a goal which will bring out the best in him.

Most preachers encounter plenty of discouragement one way or another. They need something which will counterbalance this and eventually make everything worthwhile. Unless you have an inner awareness of God's ultimate purpose for you, you could be overcome with discouragement and fail to achieve your divinely-appointed goal.

2. Vocabulary

A preacher's vocabulary is composed of the number of words he knows and with which he is familiar. Obviously, words are the tools which a preacher employs in the pursuit of his calling. The more words he knows and understands, the more fluent and expressive he can be.

Words are to the preacher what brush and paint are to the artist. A preacher can paint vivid pictures with words. As he describes a scene, his audience can almost see what he describes. Words are so important to an effective communicator. A preacher without words is a tradesman without tools.

As a preacher, you must be interested in words. Try to read widely, for reading good literature will enrich your vocabulary. Whenever you encounter a word you are not familiar with, investigate it. Find out what it means. Add it to your collection. Begin to use it in its right context and application.

Build up your vocabulary; you will become more fluent as you do. People will listen to you with much more interest, if you can adequately communicate your topic.

3. Voice

Surely the voice is a preacher's greatest natural asset. Therefore, you should endeavour to take good care of it. You should always be aware of your voice and seek to improve your use of it.

D. PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

Here are a few principles about which a public speaker should be mindful:

1. Breathing

Correct breathing is extremely important for a speaker.

- Practice breathing through your nose.
- Breathe deeply right to the bottom of your lungs.
- Practice filling your chest and lungs with air.
- Hold it and then breathe out slowly. Control the expiration.
- Let the air come right up from the bottom of your lungs, through your larynx (voice box) and hit the roof of your mouth. The roof of your mouth should act as a sounding board. When you bounce your voice off your palate, it will gain extra resonance. Learning to do this correctly will strengthen your vocal chords.

2. Articulation

Articulation is the art of uttering speech clearly. An articulate person speaks very clearly. He is easy to understand. He pronounces his words well.

Every preacher should aim to become adept in this skill. He ought to be easy to listen to. It should not impose strain to listen to him; it should be a pleasure. Even in everyday conversation, he should practice speaking clearly.

3. Inflection

Inflection in speech has to do with the pitch of your voice.

The human voice has a very wide range of tones. If you speak at the same pitch and on the same tone all the time, your voice can sound very boring. You must develop the ability to modulate your voice.

As a singer can go up and down the scale - giving forth a good variety of tones - so can the public speaker.

If your voice tends to be naturally rather high-pitched, practice speaking in the lower registers. Develop a variety of pitch in your voice.

4. Speed of Delivery

Some people tend to speak at the same rate all the time. This too can become rather boring. You should endeavour to vary the speed at which you speak. Most of your message will be delivered at a moderate rate which is easy to listen to. From time to time however, you should quicken or slow down the pace to give variety and added emphasis to your presentation.

5. Volume

This is another factor of importance. Varying the volume of your voice can give added emphasis to a point you wish to make.

The major part of your message should be delivered at a conversational volume. This ensures that it is loud enough for all to hear, yet not so loud that it assaults the ears of your audience.

Some preachers seem to feel it necessary to preach so loudly that they hurt the ears of their hearers. Try to avoid this.

If the whole of your message is delivered with loud volume, it is difficult to give special emphasis to those sections which are the most important.

Endeavor to begin your message at conversational volume. Only turn the volume right up when you have a special point to emphasise strongly.

If you occasionally drop the volume, this will also serve to give special emphasis. Your congregation will give special attention when you drop the volume. They will endeavour to hang on to every word.

6. Pausing

Don't be afraid to pause once in a while. This can also give added emphasis to some point you make. Some preachers are frightened of quiet spots. Their delivery pours forth like a river, without any pause. This can be difficult for people to absorb.

Don't race through your message, keeping up a fast tempo and hardly pausing for breath. Your congregation needs time to think and consider what you have said. This helps to really absorb the truth of your message.

You need to inform the mind as well as stir the emotions. The mind can absorb things only at a steady rate. If you preach too quickly without suitable pauses, you will leave your hearers behind.

7. Repetition

A certain amount of repetition can be good. It helps to emphasise your point and fix it in the minds of your listeners. This is the kind of emphasis which you purposely give. You are aware that you are doing it, and have a good reason for doing so. Try to present the same point in a variety of ways. You want the truth you are sharing to become part of the thinking and action of the people. In order to accomplish this, the mind needs an adequate exposure of truth and must be convinced.

E. SIMPLE TIPS FOR PREACHERS

1. Be Yourself!

Don't try to project some image that is insincere. Being yourself is the only way to be completely relaxed. If you try to imitate some other preacher, this will be communicated to your audience. They will sense the artificiality of your

preaching. Be the very best that you can be, but always be natural and be yourself.

2. Forget Yourself!

Self-consciousness can be a real hindrance in public speaking. It may produce hesitancy and uncertainty.

Chronic self-consciousness can even make a person "tongue-tied." It can severely restrict your flow of speech. Your actions and demeanour will also be restricted. You should prepare yourself as thoroughly as possible in every necessary way.

Let your study of the subject be adequate

- Let your notes be comprehensive and clear
- Be "prayed up" and filled with the Spirit.
- Be filled with the word of truth you intend to share.

Pay attention to every area of preparation you are aware of; but when you stand to speak, forget about yourself. Be completely absorbed in what you have to share. Be aware of your audience rather than of yourself.

You are a channel for God's Word to flow through. Just seek to be utterly yielded to Him, aware only of God and the people to whom you are speaking on His behalf.

3. Don't Develop A "Religious Voice" When You Are Preaching

Some preachers do this, and it is most disconcerting. Their pulpit voice is so different from their normal one.

This conveys a sense of insincerity. It is almost as though this person is "acting out a part." It also sets him apart from his congregation; they tend to see him as a different breed or species.

It almost seems as though he belongs to a different world than they. This makes it difficult for them to identify with him.

Practice preaching in a normal voice - the same voice, accent and tone that you use every day in the normal communications of life. This conveys a sense of reality and sincerity.

4. Do Not Speak Too Softly

Make sure that everyone in your audience can hear you clearly. Don't make them strain to hear your every word. If necessary, ask the crowd; "Can everybody hear me clearly?" It is pointless to proceed with your message if

part of your audience cannot hear well enough to follow you. This would be wasting your time and theirs.

5. Don't Shout

Endeavor to speak with a normal conversational tone and volume, which may have to be increased somewhat according to the size of the crowd and whether or not you have the use of an amplifying system.

6. Remember to Vary the Speed and Pitch of Your Delivery to Avoid Monotony.

7. Get The Audience To Accept You.

Win their confidence. If they do not accept you, they probably will not accept your message either!

8. Dress Appropriately

Your appearance should never detract from your ability to communicate with your audience. Ideally, you should dress rather modestly, in a manner which is not likely to offend anyone.

What is the point of antagonising your audience by your manner of dress? Your aim is to win and influence your listeners, not to antagonise them.

Your clothing should not draw undue attention to you. If possible, you should be neatly, suitably and modestly attired. Certainly your dress should not be offensive to the culture of your audience.

9. Learn To Stand Properly

On most occasions it is proper to stand when addressing an audience. You should stand firmly on both feet, giving yourself a good solid stance.

Stand upright, facing your audience. Avoid leaning on anything. If there is a pulpit or rostrum, by all means use this to place your Bible and notes on, but don't use it to lean on. Standing upright will help your breathing. It will also engender a feeling of quiet confidence as you face your audience.

10. Learn to Move Naturally

Your body conveys a message as well as your voice. It is important how you conduct yourself while speaking.

The key to proper movement is to let it be natural. Avoid unnecessary physical gesticulations. If you are verbally describing something, it is natural to also convey the idea with your hands.

Let such descriptions come naturally and spontaneously. You can emphasise a point very forcibly with your hands. All hand movements should be appropriate to what you are emphasising.

11. Establish and Maintain Eye Contact With Your Audience

Your eyes convey a message too! Don't stare into space or above the heads of the listeners. Look directly at the people you are addressing.

Let your glance rove around the congregation so that everyone feels that you are speaking to THEM. By this means, you will establish a good contact and rapport with the people.

12. Remember That Facial Expressions Are Important Too!

The look on your face conveys a message very eloquently. Avoid any extreme facial expressions unless you are emphasising some particular point. Above all, let your facial expressions be natural, and let them be appropriate to your theme and topic. Be happy and confident, unless your subject is a sad or serious one.

These suggestions are made with respect to the natural art of public speaking. Obviously the factor of greatest importance in preaching is the presence and anointing of God upon your life. However, God can bless and anoint a person who is well-prepared and has some understanding of the principles of communication.

Never despise such skills. But, on the other hand, do not depend on them either. Ultimately, only God can accomplish what you are seeking to attain through your preaching.

Let your confidence be placed firmly in Him. Understand that the only really worthwhile development in your preaching abilities is that which God accomplishes.

Chapter Six

PREACHING WITH THE ANOINTING

We have spoken of some of the natural aspects of effective preaching and now I shall conclude with a brief reference to **THE** most important factor, the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself knew the value and power of this and it was the secret of His ministry.

Luke 4:18-19

18 *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has **anointed me to preach good news** to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,*

19 *to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."* (NIV)

Acts 10:38

38 *how God **anointed** Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.* (NIV)

The anointing of the Spirit gave Him power to proclaim, **and minister**, certain benefits.

At Nazareth that day He :-

1. Preached Good News to the poor.
2. Liberty to those held captive.
3. Sight to the Blind.
4. Release to the oppressed.
5. The time of God's good favor.

He was not only anointed to proclaim and promise these blessings. The same anointing enabled Him to deliver these benefits, for He was anointed to preach and to heal.

The importance of the Anointing

The importance that God attaches to the anointing is emphasized by the fact that everyone who served Him in any capacity had to be first anointed with oil.

Every tradesman and artificer who worked on the Tabernacle or the sacred furnishing had to be anointed.

Every Priest who served in the Tabernacle had to be anointed with the special oil.

The anointing signified several important things.

Consecrated to God

A further purpose of the anointing was to consecrate persons or items to the service of God.

Exod 28:41

*41 After you put these clothes on your brother Aaron and his sons, **anoint and ordain them. Consecrate them so they may serve me as priests.*** (NIV)

Whenever a person was consecrated to God by anointing with holy oil, they were then said to be "Holy unto the Lord." Preaching God's Word is both a high and holy calling. In order to do it effectively we must be totally dedicated to God for that purpose. It must be the highest priority in one's life.

Separated for Service

In the Old Testament, the anointing was used to delegate, authorize, and set apart a person for a particular work or service of the Lord. E.g.

Isa 61:1

1 "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; he has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; (NKJ)

The anointed person belonged to God in a special sense. The phrases, "the Lord's anointed," "God's anointed," "My anointed," "Your anointed," or "His anointed" are frequently for such people. E.g. Saul 1 Sam. 26:9, 11, David 2 Sam. 22:51, and Solomon 2 Chr. 6:42. Priests, kings, and prophets were anointed. Oil was poured on the head of the person being anointed. Ex. 29:7.

Exod 29:7

7 Take the anointing oil and anoint him by pouring it on his head. (NIV)

Lev 4:5-6

5 Then the anointed priest shall take some of the bull's blood and carry it into the Tent of Meeting.

6 He is to dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle some of it seven times before the LORD, in front of the curtain of the sanctuary. (NIV)

Kings were also set apart through the ritual of anointing, which was performed by a prophet who acted in God's power and authority 1 Sam. 15:1. The Old Testament also records two instances of the anointing of a prophet 1 Kin. 19:16; Is. 61:1.

In the New Testament, Jesus the Messiah is described as "anointed." The name "Messiah" comes from the Hebrew HaMashiach, meaning the Anointed One. This description is found in the psalms of the Old Testament which prophesy the coming of Christ and in the preaching of the apostle Peter in the Book of Acts. All

who are Christ's disciples are said to be anointed; they are God's very own, set apart and commissioned for service 2 Cor. 1:21.

Every person and item in the Tabernacle was anointed with holy anointing oil

This was to consecrate, separate, and sanctify them to God. Once anointed they were declared, "Holy to the Lord" and could never be reclaimed to serve a secular purpose. Every thing or person, consecrated to God by anointing, must remain forever the Lord's. They must never be used for any other purpose but to serve and glorify God.

The priestly anointing

Exod 29:20-21

20 *"Then you shall kill the ram, and take some of its blood and put it on the tip of the right ear of Aaron and on the tip of the right ear of his sons, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar.*

21 *"And you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar, and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and on his garments, on his sons and on the garments of his sons with him; and he and his garments shall be hallowed, and his sons and his sons' garments with him. (NKJ)*

Blood was applied to the ear, thumb, toe, then oil was put on the same places. This was to signify the cleansing and anointing our hearing, actions, and walk.

The prophetic anointing.

I King 19:16

*And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.
(NKJ)*

Every authentic prophet of God must be anointed by God. The anointing signifies His confirmation of them. It also lends to them His authority and ability. No man can say, "Thus says the Lord" except by the anointed authority of God. It is the anointing that sets apart and authorises the true spokesman of God.

The Kingly anointing

1 Kings 19:16 "Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel.

This was God's enablement to rule. He anointed His rulers with wisdom and authority that they should rule under His guidance and by His authority. The peace and constantly developing prosperity of Israel under King David's rule illustrated the effectiveness of this arrangement. This is most clearly seen when contrasted to Saul's disastrous reign. Saul was the people's choice, made king against God's wisdom and advice. David was God's anointed for the kingly role.

Artificers (skilled tradesmen) anointing

Exod 31:3-5

3 *"And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,*

4 *"to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze,*

5 *"in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship. (NKJ)*

Every tradesman employed in the construction of the Tabernacle, was specifically anointed for their task. Human skill alone was not acceptable. All the work of the Tabernacle and later of the temple, must be executed by skilled tradesmen anointed by God. In our contemporary setting, the true work of God cannot be accomplished by human skills. It can only be achieved through anointed vessels.

A Death sentence for imitating it

God prescribed a specific formula for making the sacred anointing oil.

Exod 30:23-25

23 *"Take the following fine spices: 500 shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much (that is, 250 shekels) of fragrant cinnamon, 250 shekels of fragrant cane,*

24 *500 shekels of cassia-- all according to the sanctuary shekel-- and a hin of olive oil.*

25 *Make these into a sacred anointing oil, a fragrant blend, the work of a perfumer. It will be the sacred anointing oil. (NIV)*

He pronounced a death penalty for any who sought to imitate it.

Exod 30:33

33 *Whoever makes perfume like it and whoever puts it on anyone other than a priest **must be cut off from his people.**" (NIV)*

Some preachers endeavor to imitate the anointing using excitement and vocal volume. Such a spurious imitation can only minister death, not life, to one's ministry. The true anointing cannot be produced by human skills or endeavor.

Anointed to understand

Anointing in the New Testament also refers to the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which brings understanding 1 John 2:20,27.

20 *But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.*

1 Jn 2:27

27 *As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit-- just as it has taught you, remain in him. (NIV)*

This anointing is not only for kings, priests, and prophets; it is for everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. The anointing occurs physically with a substance such as oil, myrrh, or balsam. But this is also a spiritual anointing, as the Holy Spirit anoints a person's heart and mind with the love and truth of God. It is this, spiritual anointing that we need so much today. An anointing of the Holy Spirit to preach, proclaim, prophesy and heal.

Anointed to preach

When Jesus preached in the synagogue at Nazareth, He clearly stated that He was anointed, (enabled) by the Holy Spirit to do so. The very words He spoke were chosen, and empowered by the Spirit. The authority with which He spoke came from the anointing too. All His listeners spoke of the remarkable authority with which He spoke.

The preacher's anointing begins to operate in his initial inspiration, as a word from God begins to unfold in his heart. As he prayerfully pursues the significance and implication of what God is sharing, the anointing and excitement increases. As he prepares his heart and mind in anticipation of delivering that word, the anointing causes a sense of excited anticipation.

However, it is at the time of delivery that the anointing begins to become obvious. It is witnessed in the attitude and demeanor of the preacher. It becomes further evident in the clarity and authority with which the message is delivered. The Holy Spirit adds His authority to the anointed word. The anointing clarifies the preacher's mind. It stimulates his thoughts. It inspires his choice of words and his fluency. There is often a smooth flow of thoughts and words that indicate the anointing.

But the true anointing also has an effect upon the hearers. It enables them receive and understand the real message of God. The Biblical concept of preaching infers numerous concepts, the effectiveness of which demands a genuine anointing. Let's consider briefly a few of these.

To cheer with good news

The Hebrew word, *basar*, (Strong's 1319) means to announce Glad tidings. To preach, publish, and "show forth (*demonstrate*) good news by being fresh, cheerful and joyful."

Isa 61:1-2

1 *The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach (basar) good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,*

2 *to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, (NIV)*

To proclaim liberty and freedom

The Hebrew word is *qara*, (Strong's 7121, Isa 61:1). To preach, proclaim, announce, declare liberty, for the captives. How can one announce liberty

without demonstrating one's own freedom. One prisoner cannot liberate another. It requires a liberated person to convincingly proclaim freedom to others. The anointing of the Spirit upon Jesus authenticated the quality of freedom He proclaimed to others. The preacher who proclaims liberty to others must make evident his own liberty.

The Spirit gives freedom of utterance

Acts 9:27

27 *But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly (parrhesiazomai) in the name of Jesus.*

The Greek word *parrhesiazomai*, means to be frank in utterance, but it also means "to be confident in spirit and demeanor." The anointing affects both the speech and confident poise of the preacher. When you are anointed, you are bold in God.

Anointed to heal

Acts 10:38

38 *how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. (NIV)*

1. The secret of Christ's effective ministry was the anointing of the Holy Spirit.
2. God anointed Jesus with the Holy Ghost and power.
3. Through the power of the anointing, God was with Him.
4. He went about doing good and healing the oppressed.

What is the anointing?

The Anointing conveys the presence and power of God

When we are anointed, the fresh touch of God is upon us. He clarifies our thoughts, inspires our words and invests them with God's authority. He lends to us the ability to expound and speak forth His message.

The anointing of the Holy Spirit, is like the wind. You cannot see it, but you can certainly recognize the effects of it. The presence of the Spirit upon a preacher is invisible to the natural eye, but highly discernible to a mature spirit.

Value and treasure the anointing

When God anoints you, He entrusts you with a very special commodity. The fresh touch of God on your life, to enable you to speak out God's words, is a very special gift and privilege. God warns us not to despise His Spirit, or the words He inspires.

1Thes 5:19-20

19 *Quench not the Spirit.*

20 *Despise not prophesyings. (anointed utterance) (KJV)*

Thank God for the anointing

If you are called to preach, God certainly wants to anoint you. He wants to help you to preach the very best messages possible. When you face the prospect of preaching, begin to affirm positively that God's anointing is on you to preach. Keep thanking God in faith for the specific anointing you need for the particular message you will preach. Approach every opportunity in quiet, confident reliance on the Holy Ghost. Move towards your appointment in positive faith.

Go with the flow

When the Holy Spirit begins to anoint a person, He wants to establish a reciprocity (mutual exchange) with them. He wants the person to flow with Him in the anointing. We must learn to discern the moving of the Spirit and begin to cooperate with Him. He will usually move first in your mind, giving you thoughts and ideas.

As you begin to speak out these revelations, the anointing gathers momentum.

The Holy Spirit is often portrayed as a free flowing river. Realize that you are in that river. Let it lift and carry you along. It is a mighty river, flowing from the throne of God into a needy world of mankind. Let it take you wherever it flows. Allow the river to dictate just where you should go, what you say and what you do.

1. The Holy Spirit wants you to think His thoughts.
2. He wants you to speak His words.
3. He wants you to perform His actions.
4. Your obedience is the key to operative faith.

Minister in the Holy Spirit

The key to effective ministry is to minister in the Holy Spirit's anointing.

His anointing teaches us what to preach about.

His anointing enables us to speak words of faith.

His anointing helps us to discern what the Spirit is doing in the people's hearts.

It enables us to know how to act in harmony with God's Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, ministers to the spirits of those listening.

Walk by faith, not by sight

The secret of ministering in the Spirit, is to walk by Faith in what God tells you, not by what your natural senses convey. The anointing of the Spirit operates by faith. If you do not believe for it, then it will never happen. God wants to anoint and use you, but He needs your cooperation. He moves in faith, and so must you. You must therefore be prepared to move out by faith as God begins to show you things by His Spirit. Acts of power are usually the result of acts of faith. Those acts of faith transpire step by step. God shows you a small thing, you listen and obey, and then He leads you to a deeper understanding of what He is wanting to do.

Chapter Seven

TEACHING WITH THE ANOINTING

This book deals primarily with Preaching but before closing I want to share a brief word on the ministry of teaching. Preaching and teaching are similar, yet different. There is a mistaken idea abroad in many places that whilst preaching is inspired and inspirational, teaching is dull and boring. Nothing could be further from the truth. Teaching should be equally as anointed, interesting and exciting as preaching. It certainly will be if delivered under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

What are the differences?

Preaching

Let's look initially at some of the Webster's dictionary implications.

- 1.** to **proclaim** or make known by sermon (the gospel, good tidings, etc.).
- 2.** to **advocate or inculcate** (religious or moral truth, right conduct, etc.) in speech or writing.
- 3.** to **deliver** a sermon.
- 4.** to **give earnest advice**, as on religious or moral subjects or the like.

A classic concept of preaching is to **“speak passionately on a Bible subject with the intention of persuading others to believe it and take a positive course of action.”**

Preaching is usually addressed primarily to the unconverted, to persuade them to “Repent and be converted.”

There is a colloquialism that speaks of *“Preaching to the converted.”* It means, “to waste one's time and effort, trying to persuade people to accept and believe truth that they already accept and believe.”

The main purpose therefore, of preaching is Conversional Commitment.

Teaching

Let's consult the Webster's dictionary again

- 1.** to impart knowledge of or skill in; give instruction in:
- 2.** to impart knowledge or skill to; give instruction to:
- 3.** to impart knowledge or skill; give instruction.

To teach means inform, enlighten, discipline, drill, school, indoctrinate.

TO TEACH, INSTRUCT, TUTOR, TRAIN, EDUCATE share the meaning of, imparting information, understanding, or skill.

TEACH is the broadest and most general of these terms and can refer to almost any practice that causes others to develop skill or knowledge:

INSTRUCT almost always implies a systematic, structured method of teaching:

TUTOR refers to the giving of usually private instruction or coaching in a particular subject or skill: *e.g. to tutor a child in (a foreign language, algebra, history, or the like).*

TRAIN lays stress on the development of desired behaviors through practice, discipline, or the use of rewards or punishments:

EDUCATE, with a root sense of "to lead forth from," refers to the imparting of a specific body of knowledge, esp. one that equips a person to practice a profession:

"Anointed to teach."

Isaiah 61 : 1-3. Luke 4 :18,19.

Jesus was anointed to communicate. He was called Hamashiach", the anointed one, The Christ.

Acts 10 :38. How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the Devil, for God was with Him."

Teaching God's word is a spiritual exercise requiring more than principles, methods or techniques. The "anointing" represents the fresh touch of God's spirit upon a person. Everyone in the Bible who ministered to God or on His behalf was specially anointed for the task.

The Anointing comes to us in the place of :-

Prayer and spiritual communion

Communion is a two way conversation which is also what our prayer life should be. If our concept of prayer is merely our talking to God, we have forfeited the important element. What God says to us is far more important than what we say to God. This is especially true when we are seeking inspiration and anointing from Him. As He speaks into our Spirit, His word is anointed. That anointing then transfers to our spirit so that when we proclaim that word to others, it is an anointed proclamation.

Humble dependence on God, and His anointing

Should we mistakenly conclude that we can preach effectively without God's anointing, He will generally let us get on with it. We will soon then discover that we **cannot** minister effectively without His fresh touch. This realization will

hopefully convince us of our total dependency on the Holy Spirit's anointing touch.

Faith to operate under the anointing

When God' anointing comes upon you, it then requires responses of faith to begin to move forward under the anointing. Effective anointed ministry requires faith to operate.

Yieldedness to flow with the inspiration

The main key to moving in the Spirit, is yieldedness. This requires a genuine surrender to the Lordship of the Holy Spirit. It pre-supposes instant obedience to His promptings. It also requires a relaxed attitude on our part. The Spirit cannot readily flow through a person who is anxious and up-tight. Hand to situation over to God and then relax and let Him take charge.

Anointed for Preparation

We need the Spirit's anointing for revelation, spiritual insight and understanding of God's Word as we prepare ourselves to preach.

Anointed to Teach

Teaching is effectively communicating transforming truth. This requires lucidity, clarity, and authority.

King David poetically expressed it in this manner.

Ps 45:1

1 My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. (NKJ)

Communicating Spirit to spirit.

In whatever dimension we communicate, our listeners receive. If we speak from our human intellect, we communicate with their human intellect. If we teach with the Spirit, through our spirit, we reach the spirits of those to whom we speak. When we speak from the very depth of our soul, we touch the very depths of their soul. When we communicate from our emotions, we stir their emotions.

This is precisely why we must always minister with the Spirit, because He touches and transforms their spirit, through the Word of God.

Jesus is our model teacher

His Jewish educational background

As a Jewish boy, Jesus was educated in a yeshiva in which the whole curriculum was woven around the Tanach, the Jewish Bible. Every subject He studied there was viewed from the perspective of the Bible which was the sole source of authority and discipline. Likewise, in our studies, the Bible must always have the pre-eminence. It must come before all other sources of information and inspiration.

It is extremely interesting to observe how Jewish persons have influenced our world of knowledge. Although the entire Jewish population of the world amounts to only 0.5%, some 39% of all Nobel prize winners are Jewish. This comparison surely indicates something about their educational model that should recommend it to all students.

He "modeled" everything He taught

The style of teaching that Jesus employed was one in which He was a role model for everything He taught. He is the light that illuminates every man. Ideally He should be our role model in every aspect of life and certainly this ought to include His teaching method. Whatever He taught by word of mouth, He demonstrated through His life style. We should never teach or preach what we do not practise.

All that Jesus began to "do and teach". Acts. 1 :1.

Jesus usually taught by the "show and tell" method. He disciplined his followers. In the New Testament the word for disciple is *mathetes*, which implies to learn certain principles from another and to maintain them on His authority. The disciple is a student, learner, pupil or apprentice. He learns his trade by "on the job training." His tutor teaches by word of mouth and through demonstration of those principles.

Jesus frequently instructed His disciples to "Go and do likewise." As He taught them He conveyed and His transferred to them His anointing so they could emulate His example.

He established personal relationships

From the beginning of His relationships with His disciples, Jesus established a first name basis with them. Peter, James, John and the others, were not impersonal students to Him. They were each unique, special individuals. He established His teaching relationship with them on that basis. He called each one by name. He addressed them by name. He established a living, real relationship with each. On occasions He even changed their name to teach them about their true potential. Whenever he taught them His primary objective was to further and strengthen His relationship with them and their relationship with God.

He imparted revelation old and new

Matt 13:52

52 *He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."* (NIV)

Effective teachers share a mixture of truths old and new. They teach the old, established truths of the faith, but they also bring forth new truth under the inspiration of the Spirit.

Jesus often employed this style.

Teaching "doctrine" in the New Testament manner

Our contemporary perception of doctrine is largely theological and academic, much of which is theoretical, head knowledge. The study of theology today is usually pursued in a Seminary. However, the original, New Testament was quite different. The New Testament perception is biblical, spiritual, practical, and applicable.

Continuing steadfastly in Apostle's doctrine

Acts 2:42

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. (NKJ)

The "doctrine" the Apostle's taught, was not theological rhetoric, it was spiritual, practical and eminently applicable. They actually passed on to their disciples the practical principles of Godly living that Jesus had inculcated into them. He had taught and demonstrated the righteous life style that God required, encouraging them to go and do likewise.

Correctly applying the Word of truth

2 Tim 2:15

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (NKJ)

The word that is translated dividing is "orthomoteo". Its specific meaning is not to *divide* something but rather to **apply** it. It is an architectural term that means 'reading a blue print' and applying its information to the erection of the building it specifies. It is not the detailed study or memorization of the plan that is important, but the application of its information.

What is "sound doctrine?"

Titus 2:1-6

*1 You must teach what is in accord with **sound doctrine**.*

2 Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

3 Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.

4 Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children,

5 to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

6 Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. (NIV)

In this context, sound doctrine is instructing and teaching the various members how to relate to each other in the Body of Christ. The older men are to be spiritual fathers. The older women, spiritual mothers. The young men are to be as sons and the young women as daughters.

Doctrine is a mould

Rom 6:17

17 *But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form (tuftos = mould) of doctrine to which you were delivered. (NKJ)*

Doctrine is not an end in itself, it is a mould into which we are cast that we might assume the image of Jesus Christ.

What sound doctrine should produce

1 Tim 1:5

5 *The goal of this command (our teaching of doctrine) is (to produce) **love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.** (NIV)*

Paul affirms that some teachers have lost this initial goal.

1 Tim 1:6

6 *From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; (KJV)*

The result being that they have become a sounding brass that produces vain jangling.

1 Cor 13:1

1 *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. (NIV)*

The difference between wisdom and folly

Matt 7:24-26

24 *"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, **and does them, I will liken him to a wise man** who built his house on the rock:*

25 *"and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.*

26 *"Now everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, **and does not do them, will be like a foolish man** who built his house on the sand: (NKJ)*

Jesus revealed that the difference between the wise and foolish was whether or not they actually applied the Word they heard.

The summary of this teaching

A: Everyone who speaks for God should be anointed by him.

B: Any substitutes (human abilities) will minister death. Ex 30: 33, 38.

C: God will only anoint those who honour him.

D: The anointing is not to be put on "flesh." Ex. 30:32.

E: Only anointed words will reach the spirit of man.

Preaching Workshops.

As with many other skills, ability is not developed by mere study, lest it become merely theoretical knowledge. It is the actual practice of the art that develops and refines one's skill. So with preaching. Practice may not make perfect, but at least it develops and refines one's ability.

Once the students have been taught the rudiments of sermon preparation and delivery, they must be given opportunities to practise what they have learned. One mode of practice is achieved by creating opportunities for the student/preacher to exercise their developing ministry, preferably preaching in house meetings, or before small audiences.

However, another form of practice is extremely helpful. I refer to preaching workshops where the budding preacher delivers his message to the class, consisting of his fellow students, together with the teacher.

The speaker may be given an assignment to prepare a certain type of sermon. After due time for preparation the student will then be required to deliver the message to his peers. The class lecturer will chair this session. When the sermon has been delivered the teacher and students will then have opportunity to comment on the preacher's efforts. The comments should be honest and constructive. Some criticisms may be made but these should be presented positively with the sincere purpose of improving the preacher's delivery.

Comments and suggestions may be made about :-

1: Appearance.

Including Clothing, Cleanliness, Modesty, Sincerity.

Did the speaker's appearance add or detract from the presentation?

How? Why? What may be done to improve this?

Posture.

Standing upright in a tall posture helps breathing and voice production.

Did the speaker's stance enhance or detract from his presentation?

Mannerism.

Some preachers unfortunately assume false mannerisms when preaching.

Did he appear to be natural and normal in his manner?

Did he appear to be relaxed or tense?

Movement.

Were the preacher's movements natural or false?

Did his movements and gestures coincide naturally with his delivery?

Did his movements and gestures distract from what he said?

2: Sermon Delivery.

Voice.

Was his voice production normal or affected?

Was his voice easy or difficult to listen to?

Did it enhance or detract from their presentation?

Volume.

Speak too softly and some of your audience may not hear you.

Shout too loudly and your voice may soon irritate your audience.

Was the volume modulated? Soft at times, loud at others.

Did the vocal volume coincide with what was being said?

Speed.

Did the preacher speak too quickly? Difficult to understand and follow?

Was the speed of delivery varied from time to time?

Delivery.

Was the overall delivery good? Having a pleasing and convincing effect?
Were you eager to hear him speak again?

Sermon.

Did he choose an edifying and interesting topic?
Was the topic handled sympathetically and well?

Introduction.

Did the introduction arrest the attention of the audience, making them eager to hear the sermon?
Did it truly serve to introduce the subject?

Theme development.

Was the theme reasonably well covered?
Was there a good unfolding and development of the topic?
Was it delivered in an interesting and arresting manner?
Did the speaker retain the interest of their audience throughout the message?
Was there real body and meat in the message?

Illustrations.

Did illustrations and stories help to clarify the topic.
Did they truly illuminate the message?
Were they edifying to the listeners?

Conclusion

Did the speaker reach an effective conclusion before his audience lost interest?
Did the message motivate response and appropriate action?
Was the finale inspiring and edifying?

4: Clarity and effectiveness.

Did the preacher's subject come across clearly and sensibly?
Was the content of the message clearly conveyed?

Conviction.

Did the preacher appear to have heart conviction about the subject?
Did he speak from the heart?
Did he really believe what he preached?

Convincing.

Were the audience finally as convinced as the speaker?

Overall impression

What was the overall final impression of the message?
Good? Not so Good? Poor? Why? How can this be improved?

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Please turn to Checklist on next page.

Category.	Comments	Score	out of.
1. Appearance			5
2. Posture			5
3. Mannerisms			5
4. Movement			5
5. Voice			5
6. Volume			5
7. Speed			5
5. Delivery			5
6.Sermon content			10
7. Introduction			5
8. Theme Development			10
9. Illustrations			5
10. Conclusion			5
11. Clarity			5
12. Preacher's Conviction			5
13. Convincing			5
14. Overall Impression.			10
TOTAL			100



Dynamic Principles of CHURCH GROWTH

INDEX

1	The early church was a growing church	301
2	Growth factors in the early church	305
3	Church growth for smaller churches	315
4	Your church can grow	322
5	The ministry of evangelism	327
6	Strategizing for church growth	344
7	Essential elements of church growth	351
8	The mechanics of church growth	361
9	Small churches can be beautiful too	365
10	Let's summarize	371

Chapter One

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH WAS A GROWING CHURCH

The immediate, explosive and continuing growth of the early church emphasizes several important truths.

1. GOD INTENDS HIS CHURCH TO GROW.

Everything which God plants is destined to grow. He is the author of growth and His skills are evident in all of nature. The Church is the true vine and God is the vine dresser. (John. 15:1.) He has ordained His Church to bear fruit in all the earth.

As soon as the New Testament church was planted, it began to grow.

One the first day, 3,000 souls were added to the church. (Acts. 2:41.)

Following a dynamic power encounter a further 5,000 men, (with how many women and children?) were added to the church. (Acts. 4:4.)

"And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women. " (Acts.5:14.)

"Now in those days, the number of disciples was multiplying." (Acts. 6:1.)

"And the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem." (Acts. 6:7.)

"And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip." (Acts 8:6)

"And many believed on the Lord." (Acts. 9:42.)

The history of the primitive early church is a record of consistent phenomenal growth, setting a pattern for the church throughout the ages.

2. IF JESUS TRULY BUILDS HIS CHURCH, IT WILL GROW.

Jesus said, *"I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* (Matt. 16:18.)

There are many opposing factors which would seek to hinder the growth and expansion of the church but when Jesus Himself builds it, not even the all the wisdom of hell and strategies of Satan can prevent the victory of the church.

Jesus must be the One who is building the Church.

It must be built according to His Divine pattern.

- Demons oppose its growth.

- Religious principalities resist it.
- Political ideologies try to prevent it.
- Intellectualism tries to block its path.
- Skepticism and philosophy endeavour to undermine it.
- Socially influential persons try to hinder its progress.
- Devotees of false religions attempt to block its onward march.

***EVEN THE VERY GATES, (WISDOM, STRENGTH, AND POWER) OF HELL
CAN NEVER PREVENT THE PROGRESS OF THE TRUE CHURCH.***

3. THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH IS A MODEL FOR ALL TIME.

The history of the early church, recorded in Acts, and the Epistles, is not merely a historic record of a unique phase of the Church's history, it is intended to be a pattern and a blue print for the Church throughout the ages.

4. FIRST CENTURY PRINCIPLES FOR A 20TH CENTURY CHURCH.

Obviously the style and methodology of the early church was especially appropriate for that time and location. There are definitely many cultural and contemporary features indicated in the account of its first years. However, there are also many timeless principles which may be adjusted and applied effectively at any time and in any place. We shall be looking at some of these aspects later in the course of this study. God's principles are changeless but His methods are not. We need to be "*anchored to the Rock but geared to the times.*"

5. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

One thing should be obvious to all but the most biased observer, and that is that the Holy Spirit was obviously the life empowerment factor of the early church. He was the catalyst who stirred the early church. He was the gentle breeze which spread the seed of God's Word far and wide. He was the dynamic empowerment who motivated the first apostles. His was the vital power which changed multitudes of lives.

The areas of the Church today which are presently experiencing the most dynamic and explosive growth, are those churches which honour the Holy Spirit and allow Him room and the right to exercise His sovereign will.

Unfortunately many Christians have labeled this stream, giving it various names such as "Pentecostal", or "Charismatic". This has tended to polarise the universal Church into charismatic and non-charismatic groupings, creating distinct segments and causing some non-charismatic groups to deny the Spirit any room or opportunity to express His authority. We must willingly acknowledge, whatever our doctrinal persuasion, that **THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE DYNAMIC LIFE OF THE CHURCH** and without His manifest

presence the Church is like a grave yard. We must all allow God the Holy Spirit to take His rightful place in the Church.

6. JESUS CHRIST IS LORD OF HIS CHURCH.

The powerful emphasis of the first message ever proclaimed in the "Christian Church", was, "*God has made this same Jesus both LORD and Messiah.*" (Acts. 2:36.) This powerful proclamation was the launching pad for the Church age and remains the dominant emphasis of the true Church. To experience real success in Church Growth we must both acknowledge and proclaim the intrinsic truth of this. **We must allow Jesus the right to actually be the Lord of His Church and we must sublimate everything to His rule.**

- He is building HIS OWN Church.
- The Church which faithfully proclaims Him.
- The Church which fearlessly exalts Him.
- The Church which boldly acknowledges that HE is LORD

7. THE BIBLE IS THE AUTHENTIC PATTERN.

The modern church must get back to the Word of God and base its beliefs and practices on the Word alone. Too many seminaries and Bible colleges teach a denominational position instead of the whole counsel of God. Too many modernistic seminaries teach a diluted version of the true Gospel. They endeavour to explain away the miraculous and teach a spurious version of the Gospel which will not offend the intellectual pride of man. The early church was unashamedly Bible based. It proclaimed the unadulterated Word of God. It practiced the truths of the Bible. It was biblically oriented in all its proclamations and practices and if we are to emulate the growth which they experienced, we must take the same position.

8. THE END TIMES ARE HARVEST TIMES.

The Bible Prophets have always predicted the final triumph of the Kingdom of God. They have prophesied the Coming of Messiah to earth to establish His righteous rule over the nations. They have also clearly indicated that before this happens there will be a world wide harvest of unprecedented proportion. A time prior to the Second Coming when the Spirit will be poured out all over the earth and upon ALL flesh.

This tremendous "End Time Harvest", which will impact the whole world, will be accomplished through the means of Church Planting. God is presently preparing a great army of Church Planters across the earth who will preach the Gospel of the Kingdom and establish new local churches amongst all the ethnic groups of earth.

In Genesis 12:1-3. God promised Abram that "through his descendants He would bless every ethnic group on earth." The Church is a part of Abram's

seed and the time for the fulfillment of this promise is almost upon us. We are privileged to be a small part of the end time harvesters who will reap the rewards. Here are a few of the scriptures which support this prospect :-

Rom. 4:13. Abraham is called, *"heir to the world."*
Jer. 32:27. *"I am the Lord God of ALL flesh."*
Psa. 24:1. *"The earth is the Lord's, and all those that dwell on it."*
Joel. 2:28. Acts. 2:17. Spirit poured out on ALL flesh."
Isa. 66:16. *"Lord will plead with ALL flesh."*
Isa. 40:5. *"ALL flesh shall see the glory of God."*
Isa. 66:23. *"ALL flesh shall come and worship before Me."*
Psa. 145:21. *"Let ALL flesh bless His Holy Name."*
Psa. 2:8. *Heathen for His inheritance, uttermost earth for His possession."*
Rev. 5:9. *"Out of EVERY kindred, tongue, people and nation."*
Rev. 7:9. *"Innumerable company, every people, kindred and tongue."*
Rev. 11:15. *"Kingdoms of this world become Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ."*

9. JESUS IS COMING FOR A GLORIOUS CHURCH.

"That He might present her to Himself, a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."
(Eph. 5:27.)

The Church for which Christ returns will not be a carnal, fleshly, back-slidden travesty of the true Church. It will not be a modernistic, social emphasis, powerless Church with the marks of carnality upon it. Rather it will be a glorious Church, filled with life and power, experiencing growth and triumph to the four corners of the earth. It will be a Church moving in power and authority across the earth, proclaiming the Good News of God's Kingdom and establishing new groups of believers everywhere.

10. IT WILL EVEN WORK FOR YOU!

As we further investigate and discuss the glorious prospects of Church Growth in these exciting days, a thought may occur to you. Something within you may say, "These things may be true, and they may happen in many parts of the world, but I am sure that they will not happen here in the work in which I am involved." This is a tactic which Satan frequently tries to use, that it can happen to anyone but YOU. God is no respecter of persons. He is going to visit every nation despite any contrary indications. This great revival and harvest of the nations will happen all over the world and YOU can be a part of it.

Chapter Two

GROWTH FACTORS IN THE EARLY CHURCH

The three main factors in Church Growth were :-

- 1: EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP.**
- 2: EDIFICATION OF THE BODY.**
- 3: EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH.**

Let us : A. Observe these in the early Church.
B. Relate them to the modern Church.

1: EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP.

A. APPOINTED BY GOD.

There is a mistaken idea in many denominations that ministers *must be* seminary trained. Actually the evidence would indicate that the longer one is a student in seminary, the less likely he is to plant churches or pastor a dynamically increasing congregation. Theologians do not generally pioneer churches, nor do they usually see dynamic growth in their churches.

The important thing for truly effective leaders is that they are chosen and appointed by God. Such giftings should always be recognised, appreciated and joyfully accepted.

B. APOSTOLIC GIFTINGS. The ministry gifts recognised in Apostolic times were Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers. Eph. 4:11.

C. ANOINTED. Jesus commanded His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they became empowered by the Holy Ghost.

Luke 24:49 - *"Wait... until.."*

Acts 1:8 - *"You shall receive power.."*

Acts 2:4 - *"They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.."*

Acts 4:31 - *"They spoke the Word of God with boldness."*

Acts 10:38 - *"God anointed Jesus .. with the Holy Spirit.."*

Acts 13:9 - *"Then Paul, .. filled with the Holy Spirit.."*

Eph. 5:18 - *"Be not drunk with wine..but be filled with the Spirit."*

D. UNITED. The leadership of the early church was a team leadership which was united in heart, mind and spirit. They prayed together, fellowshiped together, and waited on God together, so that a deep spiritual unity developed amongst them. Thus when *"Peter stood with the eleven"*, (Acts. 2 :14.) it was as though **they all spoke with one voice**. Ministry teams in the church today must value, appreciate, and strive for such unity.

Acts 2:1 - *"All with one accord, in one place.."*

Acts 2:42 - *"Continued steadfastly in .. KOINONIA.."*

Acts 2:44 - *"All who believed were 'together' and had all things common."*

Acts 2:46 - *"..continuing daily with one accord.."*

Acts 4:32 - *"the multitude..who believed..were of one heart and one soul."*

Acts 4:24 - *"they raised their voice to God with one accord."* The unity of the ministry team.

Acts 2:14 - *"But Peter, standing up with the eleven.."*

E. THEY WERE PRAYERFUL.

The unity about which we have just spoken, carried over into the prayer life of the early church. It is this unity and harmony which makes congregational prayer so powerfully effective. Without it congregational prayer is insipid and powerless. It is when a congregation LIFTS UP ITS VOICE WITH ONE ACCORD that miraculous answers are received to those prayers.

Acts 1:14 - *"These all continued in prayer with one accord."*

Acts 2:42 - *"Continued steadfastly in prayer."*

Acts 4:24 - *"They raised their voice to God with one accord.."*

Acts 4:31 - *"And when they had prayed..the place was shaken."*

Acts 13:3 - *"And having fasted and prayed..."*

Acts 14:23 - *"..appointed elders...and prayed with fasting.."*

F. THEY GAVE POWERFUL PROCLAMATION.

Acts 2:14 - *"Peter...raised his voice and said .."*

Biblical - Joel 2. Psalm 16:8-11; Psalm 68:18; 110:1.

G. THEY EXERCISED BOLDNESS IN PROCLAMATION.

Some definitions of Boldness: BRAVELY, CONFIDENTLY, ASSERTIVELY ADVENTUROUSLY, AUTHORITATIVELY. - (Please consider the significance of each of these words in respect of **your preaching**.)

Acts 4:13 - *"when they saw the boldness of Peter and John.."*

Acts 4:29 - *"that with all boldness they may speak your Word."*

Acts 4:31 - *"they spoke the Word of God with boldness."*

Acts 9:27 - *"..how he had preached boldly at Damascus.."*

Acts 9:29 - *"and he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord.."*

Acts 14:3 - *"they stayed there...speaking boldly in the Lord."*

Acts 18:26 - *"Apollos...began to speak boldly in the synagogue."*

Acts 19:8 - *"he..spoke boldly for three months."*
2 Cor. 7:4 - *"great is my boldness of speech before you.."*

BOLDNESS AND AUTHORITY IN PREACHING COME FROM :-

A: PREACHING THE WORD OF GOD. Acts. 4:29.

B: SPEAKING FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE: Acts 4:20 - *"For we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard."*

H. THEY WERE FILLED WITH THE HOLY GHOST

Acts 4:8 - *"Peter, ..filled with the Holy Ghost, said to them"*

Being "filled with the Spirit", is a daily experience, an ongoing, continuous requirement. We must maintain the fullness of the Spirit. The tense of Eph. 5:18. indicates, "Be constantly being filled with the Spirit."

I. THEY EXPERIENCED POWER ENCOUNTERS.

- a) When the Power of God is clearly manifested.
- b) When the Power of God confronts opposing forces.
- c) When God's power directly confronts that of Satan and demons.

Acts 2:14-39 - This was a 'power encounter'. - power preaching!

Acts 2:43b - *"many signs and wonders were done by the Apostles."*

Acts 3:1-10 - Power ministry through Peter and John.

Acts 3:11-26 - In Solomon's porch.

Acts 5:1-11. - Ananias and Sapphira.

Acts 5:12-16 - Many signs and wonders done amongst the people. Acts 6:8 - *"Stephen, full of faith, did great wonders and signs.."*

Acts 8:5,6 - *"Philip..preached Christ to them..and the multitudes..hearing and seeing the miracles which he did."*

Acts 9:36 - Peter and Dorcas

Acts 9:42 - Many believed on the Lord.

Acts 10:34 - House of Cornelius vs. 44-48 - *"while he yet spoke"*

Acts 11:21 - *"and the hand of the Lord was with them."*

Acts 13:8-12 - Paul and Elymas

Acts 14:9 - Paul at Lystra *"stand up straight on your feet"*.

Acts 16:16-19 - Paul delivers the servant girl.

Acts 16:25-34 - In the Philippian jail.

Acts 19:11 - *" and the Lord worked mighty miracles by the hand of Paul."*

Acts 19:14-16 - Sons of Sceva (warning).

Acts 26:13-44; 21-26 - Paul's Word of Knowledge.

Acts 28:3-5 - Paul and the viper (Mark 16).

2: EDIFICATION OF THE BODY.

1: THE EMPHASIS OF PETER'S MESSAGE AND INSTRUCTIONS.

The powerful effect of Peter's message upon the crowd, and his clear emphasis on THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST, laid the foundation for the all that followed. It clarified the requirements of the Gospel and prepared the new believers for the indoctrination and establishing which followed.

Acts 2:37 - *"When they heard this, they were cut to the heart."* (The Word cut through their mind, objections, pre-conceived notions, to the heart.)

Acts 2:37 - *"they cried out to Peter, "what shall we do?"*

PETER'S EXPLICIT COMMAND.- Acts 2:38,39:

- A. REPENT. - Turn from your old life.
- B. BE BAPTISED. Bury the old life.
- C. RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT. Receive the new life.

Acts 2:40 - *"Save yourselves from this untoward generation."*

Our "salvation from sin, its power and its penalty", is accomplished when we repent and receive Christ. Our salvation "from this untoward (perverse, rebellious, mutinous) generation", transpires through obedience and practice of the kind of teaching and indoctrination which the Apostles gave them.

Acts 2:41 - *"but those who gladly received the Word were baptised."*

Acts 2:42 - *"they continued steadfastly in the faith."*

Acts. 2 : 42. tells us that they continued steadfastly in four things :-

a: APOSTLES DOCTRINE.

"Doctrine", in this context, had little to do with systematic theology or the systematising of their religious beliefs. It had to do with the practical issues of living their new lives effectively to the Glory of God. The Apostle's doctrine was the manner of life which they had learned and imbibed from living in close proximity to Jesus for some three years. He had indoctrinated them with the Kingdom style of living. He had taught them by precept, example, and practice, the life style that befitted the Kingdom of God. Now they were passing on this new life style to the new believers.

In the context of the New Testament "doctrine" is almost inevitably linked with the practicalities of right behaviour and good relationships within the Body of Christ. After exhorting Timothy to *"Give heed to his doctrine"*, - 1 Tim. 4 :16. Paul proceeds to remind him of how the various members of the Body should relate to each other. 1 Tim. 5 :1-16. Likewise in Titus. 2: 1-10.

b: KOINONIA.

The Greek word for "Fellowship" is "koinonia" which has a much deeper meaning than is generally understood in the Church today. It was used of strong partnerships and solemn relationships. In the New Testament setting it obviously refers to the NEW COVENANT RELATIONSHIP in which we are now related to God through Christ, and by which we are related to one another in the deep bonds of covenant relationship.

c: BREAKING OF BREAD.

"Breaking bread from house to house", infers much more than sharing the communion meal together. It also has connotations of covenant relationship and also of the genuine hospitality which was lovingly shared by the partners of the New Covenant koinonia.

d: PRAYERS.

The fact that "prayers" comes after the previous three factors is not by chance. The quality of the united prayers which came from this company are only possible when the company is strongly and inseparably united as they were. The quality of their mutual commitment, plus the other features of their new redeemed life style, had a profound and powerful effect on their intercession.

2: FOUNDATIONAL TEACHING.

Acts 2:40 - *"With many other words he testified and exhorted them"*. Their learning was not in a class room context, academic and isolated from the realities of life. Nor was it theological in the modern concept of the word. It was scriptural, spiritual, and practical. e.g Acts 1:1 - *"All that Jesus began to do and teach."*

3: MENTORING.

"The influence of a mature and trusted advisor upon a younger apprentice". This teaching style of the Apostles was *"be followers of me, even as I am a follower of Christ."* 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:7,9.

4: COMRADESHIP.

Acts 4:23 - *"being let go they went to their own companions."*
Acts 4:32 - *"multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and one soul."*
Acts 4:33 - *"And with great power the Apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on them all."*

The fellowship of believers within a church should never be allowed to degenerate to a "club style", of membership which is formal and structured. The members need to be friends and companions, with a spiritual sense of comradeship and brotherhood which is living and enduring.

5: THEY HAD ALL THINGS COMMON. - Acts 4:32b

It was this style of relationship to which I have just referred which enabled them to gladly share their lives and goods together. There was a deep sense of loving concern which caused them to live for each other, sharing their victories, burdens, and experiences, in a spirit of mutual brotherhood.

6: THEIR GENEROUS AND SACRIFICIAL GIVING. - Acts 4:34-37

From the very commencement of the early church the members accepted responsibility for the financial support of their various activities and thus became self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating, all of which is necessary for a truly New Testament pattern church. In some countries there is a tendency to look overseas for financial support for Church Planting and Church Growth. This is a mistake. It may be more difficult, and it will certainly be more challenging, to undertake ones own financial support, but in the long run it is much better and the church becomes much stronger.

Someone has made the observation, and I believe it to be largely true, that any church, or organisation which is commenced with imported finances will be in danger of dying for the lack of them.

7: THEY REJOICED IN SUFFERING SHAME. Acts. 5 :41.

The early church encountered much opposition, discrimination and persecution, but instead of discouraging or hindering its growth, the winds of persecution served only to fan the flames of revival. I have personally frequently observed that "the stronger the opposition, the stronger the converts and the church."

At times when I have felt that it is so difficult and hard for the people who make commitment to Christ that it will probably discourage anyone from making a commitment, the reverse has been true. People have still come to Christ and the strength and quality of their commitment has been all the more remarkable.

8: ADEQUATE ADMINISTRATION - ORGANISATION. Acts 6:1-7.

OVERCOMING GROWING PAINS. Anyone who has been personally involved in Church Growth knows that growth usually progresses in phases. After a period of exciting upward growth we frequently reach a plateau. This temporary pause is often caused by some problem which when dealt with will lead on to even greater growth. This was clearly the case in Acts. 6 : 1-7. The solution lay in the appointment of more workers and the introduction of **DELEGATION.** (to entrust and commit a task to another, and to confer such authority to them as is necessary to fully accomplish the task.)

THE PROBLEM.

A: MULTIPLICATION frequently brings its own problems, often referred to as "growing pains." However, the solving of such problems usually leads to even greater growth.

B: MURMURING caused dissension and disunity amongst the believers.

C: INADEQUATE ORGANISATION. The organisational procedures did not keep pace with the rapid growth which was occurring. This incident introduces the realisation that good and proper organisation and administration is essential to Church Growth. This is a reality with which many churches have had to come to terms in the past few years. Prior to this, good organisational procedures were seldom seen in church circles. But with the recent dramatic growth rates in many churches this aspect has been seen to be crucial.

D: RACIAL DISHARMONY. Inadequate organisation caused some racial discrimination and tension furthering the disunity and creating unwanted tensions. The problems we face may take many different guises but most of them can be overcome with improved organisational procedures.

THE SOLUTION.

A. ESTABLISH RIGHT PRIORITIES. What to delegate - what not to delegate.

The Apostles determined that it was not appropriate for them to neglect their spiritual tasks of "the Word of God, prayer and the ministry of the Word." Vs.2,4. in order to supervise the more practical tasks of feeding the widows etc. Therefore it was determined that suitable persons be recruited to whom these tasks would be delegated.

B. DELEGATION. The process of delegation is a thoroughly biblical one often referred to as "The Jethro Principle." - **Ex. 18:13-27.** Please note the basic principles.

a: Select suitable people. v.21.

God fearing Men.
Men of truth.
Hating covetousness.

b: Teach them their tasks. verse 20.

c: Appoint them to their ministries. verse 21b

d: Give them adequate authority. verse 22. *"Let them bear the burden with you."*

e: It will be easier for the leader. - verse 22b.

f: It will be better for the people.. Ex. 18:18

THE APOSTLES ALSO ADOPTED THESE PRINCIPLES.:-

1. CHOOSING THE RIGHT PEOPLE. Verse 3.

- a. Good reputation.
- b. Full of the Holy Ghost.
- c. Full of wisdom.
- e. Full of faith. - Verse 5 - Stephen.

2. DELEGATING THE RIGHT TASKS.

- a. Define the task.
- b. Communicate it clearly, - preferably in writing.
- c. Pray over them (verse 6b)
- d. Commission them - authority. (responsibility before authority).
- e. Give them proper recognition.

3. DISCIPLING THE "APPRENTICES".

Through a process of :-

- a: Instruction.
- b: Demonstration.
- c: Involvement.
- d: Evaluation.

4: THE PLEASING RESULTS. Acts 6:7.

- a: The Word of God spread.
- b: The number of "disciples" increased greatly.
- c: A great many priests became "obedient to the Faith"
(Possibly the reason why "a great many priests became obedient to the Faith", was because the Apostles now had more time to 'wait on their ministries', and improve their preaching and teaching effectiveness.)
- d: Deacons like Stephen and Philip graduated to Apostolic ministry.

3: EVANGELISTIC ACTIVITIES.

A. CONSPICUOUS PUBLIC PROCLAMATION.

Acts 26:26 - *"This thing, (Christ's death and resurrection), was not done in a corner."*

Public proclamation was a powerful feature of early Church Growth. The Apostles took their message to the places of public gathering and fearlessly proclaimed the Gospel. Unfortunately the modern church has largely retreated into its ivory towers, and the most profound and powerful proclamation is made before a captive, already convinced and committed audience. If the public are coming into a church in convincing numbers then evangelism within the church may be justified, but if this is not the case then the church must find ways and means of going public and proclaiming their message to the people who really need to hear it. Please read the following incidents and note the public exposure :-

- Acts 2: 14 -39. Peter's great Pentecostal message.
- Acts 3:1-10 - Peter and John at the Temple.
- Acts 3:11-26 - The multitudes in Solomon's Porch.
- Acts 8:4-25 - Philip in Samaria.

B: MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE.

Following the scattering of the Church, (Acts. 8 : 1-4.) they finally got the message that God wanted them to reach out from Jerusalem into Judea, Samaria, and from there to the uttermost parts of the earth. (Acts. 1 :8.) The Church soon became a powerful missionary sending church. viz.

- Acts 13:1-3
- Acts 13:4 - Cyprus.

Acts13 - Antioch
Acts 14:1 - Iconium etc.

C: POWER ENCOUNTERS.

Power encounters remained an integral and vital tool for evangelism. Wherever the Apostles and disciples preached the Word of God, signs and wonders followed as Jesus had promised. Mark. 16 : 15-20.

Paul declared that he had *"fully preached the Gospel of Christ from Jerusalem to Illyricum, with mighty signs and wonders by the Spirit of God."* - Rom.15:9. Such evidences are still current today and wherever the Gospel is confirmed in this manner the greatest progress and growth is to be seen.

D: LAY MINISTERS' ACTIVITIES (Harnessing the Body).

The early church revival was one in which "laymen" played a significant role. On the scattering of the Church, (Acts. 8 :1-4.) the Apostles were the only ones who remained in Jerusalem. The rest of the church was "scattered abroad" through persecution and it was these "refugees" who spread the Gospel wherever they went. Their ministry was not one of formal preaching but one in which they talked (laleo) about Jesus wherever they went.

I am personally convinced that the great revival and harvest of the Last Days is also one in which non-ordained ministers will feature strongly. (I refer to ordination in the technical sense in which the ordinee is seen to be a seminary trained graduate with an academic degree.)

Probably the greatest harvest presently taking place is in the People's Republic of China and is a classic example of this. Amongst the many thousands of effective leaders, a very small percentage have had any seminary training and an even smaller number are officially ordained by any denomination.

E: HOLY GHOST BOLDNESS.

In the face of discrimination, threats and persecution, the early church certainly needed extraordinary boldness to fulfill their task. The incident in Acts. 4 :18 -31. is a fine illustration of their tenuous position and their bold response to the threats of the authorities.

Acts 4:18 - Threatened. Forbidden to preach Jesus.
Acts 4:29 - Prayed for boldness.
Acts 4:31 - *"And they spoke the Word of God with boldness."*

Such boldness is still a prime requirement for those who will effectively proclaim the Gospel. Even without such discrimination and threats, it still requires great courage and boldness to proclaim the Gospel fearlessly and

effectively. This kind of proclamation is essential to the dynamic growth of the Church.

F: THEY HAD "BEEN WITH JESUS" (Acts 4:13)

It was very evident, even to the unconverted community, that the disciples had spent quality time with Jesus. The effects of the intimate communion which the disciples enjoyed with Christ, was evident to all.

G: DAILY ACTIVITY. *"Daily in the Temple and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that Jesus was the Messiah."* (Acts 5:42) The church's witness and proclamation became a feature of their every day lives.

Chapter Three

CHURCH GROWTH FOR SMALL CHURCHES

One of the main reasons for writing this manual is to encourage and assist those of you who shepherd small churches to believe and work to see your church experience healthy growth. I am particularly keen to help those who have recently planted a new congregation. The congregations may be small. You probably do not own a "church" building. You may have limited access to personnel, finances, and facilities, **but YOUR CHURCH CAN STILL GROW.**

SEE YOUR CHURCH AS JESUS SAW IT.

In Matt. 18 : 20. I believe we have an exquisite brief definition of a church in its simplest form. Jesus, speaking in the context of a serious discussion on church function, says ***"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."***

So a church, in its simplest form is :-

- a: A minimum of 2, or 3 people.
- b: Gathered together in the Name (authority) of Jesus.
- c: With Jesus "in the midst of them."

There is no mention of :-

- a: A church building.
- b: Any specified liturgy or order of service.
- c: Ordained clergy or seminary graduates.
- d: Constitution.

It is interesting to note that in the four gospels, which record the earthly ministry of Jesus, there are only three mentions of the word "church" and there are 80 references to Kingdom.

But those three references teach us some important lessons as to how Jesus "perceived" the church.

a: Matt. 16 : 16-18.

V.16. Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

V.17. Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

V.18. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

V.19. And I will give to you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth, will have been loosed in heaven."

Notice:

- It is Jesus who builds the church.
- The foundation, the revelation and confession of who Christ is.
- Only God can give that revelation.
- God gives the "keys" of His Kingdom to men of apostolic gift.
- Commissioned to open what has been opened in heaven.
- They can close (bind) what God has already bound in heaven.

b: Matt. 18 : 15-20.

V.15. "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

V.16. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

V.17. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church, but if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen or a tax collector.

V.18. Assuredly I say to you that whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven. and whatsoever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

V.19. Again I say to you that if two or three of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.

V.20. For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, I am there in the midst of them."

Notice:

- The church is a brotherhood (Koinonia) of believers.
- God wants the brothers to actively pursue unity and harmony.
- The church is an assembly or gathering of people.
- Whatever they ask in agreement, will be granted by God.
- Wherever even two or three gather together in Christ's Name, He will be amongst them.

THINK "FELLOWSHIP", RATHER THAN "CHURCH".

The word church has collected a lot of connotations over the years which are non-biblical. Therefore if we think in terms of "church", our mind tends to focus on an extra-biblical image.

One of the words most frequently employed to describe the structure and nature of a church, is **Fellowship**. The Greek word translated thus is "**Koinonia**", and is probably the best way to describe what a church is meant to be.

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Koinonia, or Fellowship, is used to describe the deepest, richest, strongest, most intimate, and binding type of partnership that exists. It is used in this manner to describe

- a: Our relationship with God.
- b: Our relationship with one another in the Body of Christ.

In the view of Jesus, each local church was a Koinonia. A living, vibrant, dynamic, committed partnership of believers. Their commitment being firstly to God, and secondly to each other.

The basic meaning of koinonia is "partnership." The partnership of marriage, as exemplified in the Bible, is perhaps an ideal model of this. The members are equal partners in the relationship. They participate fully in its activities, sharing equally in its responsibilities and privileges.

Some of the words which illustrate the nature of this relationship are sharer, participator, associate, companion, partaker.

I believe that the most attractively compelling feature of the early church was the nature of this relationship. It was one which touched every facet of the lives of those who became participants. It was both challenging, and fulfilling. An attractive element which drew multitudes into its orbit. I further believe that this kind of relationship still has enormous attraction today and that any church fellowship that features this quality of relationship will experience dynamic purpose and growth.

THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

In Luke 9 : 1-6. & Luke. 10 : 1-12. we see the commissioning by Jesus of the first evangelists who were ever sent out. There are numerous interesting points here, one of which is that they were to use private homes for their accommodation and as the base for their activities. This evidently began a long tradition of using private houses as evangelistic bases and also places in which to conduct the activities of the new congregations which came into being.

Much of the activity of the early church took place in the homes of new believers. So in the view of Jesus and of the Apostles, a church which was conducted in a house was a perfectly legitimate church and did not need a consecrated building or formal liturgy to validate it. (The early church evidently did not possess consecrated buildings for at least three centuries.)

So if your church consists of just a few believers and you meet in a house, do not be ashamed or embarrassed, you are consistent with the early church model and many great churches began in this manner.

IMPORTANT FACTORS IN SMALL CHURCH EFFECTIVENESS.

a: BE A SHEPHERD TO THE FLOCK. The analogy of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and believers as His flock is a good one. Pastors are to be faithful under-shepherds, caring for the flock in Christ's behalf.

Psalm 23. is interesting in this respect. According to Jewish tradition this psalm represents a day and a night in the life of a sheep. The sheep is recounting its blessing in having so wonderful a shepherd as the Lord.

Notice some of those things for which the sheep is grateful :-

The Lord is a SHEPHERD.

He gives the sheep assurance of adequate provision. (PROVIDER.)

He is a LEADER, going before the sheep and leading in the right direction.

He makes me to lie down. (SECURITY.)

He provides green pastures, - tender shoots, for food. (FEEDER.)

His ministry is refreshing and restorative. (RESTORER.)

He sets an example of righteousness for the sheep to follow. (EXAMPLE.)

Through the valley of the shadow, the Shepherd's rod and staff are a constant source of encouragement. (COMFORT)

He provides a safe sheep-fold, where wolves and hyenas are unable to enter. (PROTECTION.)

He anoints the head. (ANOINTING.)

He inspires optimism of life-long goodness and mercy. (OPTIMIST.)

This sheep will be a life long subject in the house of its shepherd.

(INSPIRES HOPE FOR FUTURE.)

b: DEVELOP YOUR MINISTRY. *"Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."* Col. 4 :17.

"Give attention to reading, to exhortation, teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy, with the laying on of hands by 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 that hear you." 1 Tim. 3 :13 -16.

God can never grow a church bigger than its leadership. As you allow Him to develop you in your spiritual life and ministry, the church will grow with you, benefiting from the growing maturity of your life and ministry.

The early Apostles gave a high priority to the development of their ministries.

(Acts. 6 : 4.) concentrating on prayer, the study of God's Word, and the ministry of that Word.

c: PRACTICE THE BASIC PRINCIPLES. The three basic principles of growth irrespective of the size of that church are :-

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP.
EDIFYING THE BODY.
EVANGELISTIC ACTIVITIES.

(We discuss these principles at some length in Chapter. 2. Please study them carefully and practice them faithfully, they are as essential and as effective in a small church as in a much larger one.

d: DON'T BREAK THE "OIKOS" TIES. One of the many benefits of a small new congregation is that generally the majority of the people are new converts. There are many advantages in this, namely that :-

- New believers are still in the warm passion of their first love.
- They are enthusiastic and enterprising.
- They find it easier to share their testimony with others.
- They still have many contacts amongst their non-Christian friends.

It is important that you encourage them to maintain contact with such friends for they are a prospective mission field. The Bible calls such family members and personal friends one's "oikos". Witnessing to them and winning them to Christ is an especially fruitful means of evangelism.

e: SPECIAL FEATURES OF A SMALL CHURCH. There are some aspects of Church Growth strategy which seem easier for large churches to engage in, but here are some features in which any congregation, no matter how small may engage.

A STRONG EMPHASIS ON PRAYER. Prayer was the birthing environment of the early church and is an indispensable feature of church growth today. Prayer for revival, healthy development, and dynamic growth must be encouraged at all levels, corporately, in all kinds of groups, and individually. Prayer is essential at every stage of growth. It will help birth, sustain and increase healthy growth.

HOLY SPIRIT ATMOSPHERE. Two things are essential for a genuine Holy Spirit atmosphere and environment.

Firstly, the unhindered presence of the Holy Spirit.
Secondly the free participation of Spirit-filled people.

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The fruit and gifts of the Spirit need to be manifestly evident in a spontaneous yet orderly manner. Nothing is more attractive or exciting than the liberating presence of the Holy Spirit. His presence makes the difference.

WARM PERSONALISED FELLOWSHIP. There are some very special benefits available in the gatherings of smaller congregations and one of them is the warm, informal, friendly and caring atmosphere which frequently characterises such churches. People are able to get to know each other on a personal basis. The friendships and relationships formed are personalised and fulfilling.

PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS. In the smaller congregation, the full time staff is usually very small and all kinds of voluntary assistance is urgently needed and greatly appreciated. Everyone is valued and needed. This kind of situation makes it feasible for members of the congregation to function in their priestly capacity. Shepherding, nurturing and discipling can be undertaken in a very natural fashion in this type of setting.

EXCITING PRAISE AND WORSHIP. Large numbers can tend to formalise the worship environment of a big church, but smaller ones frequently maintain an informality that is conducive to a joyful spirit of freedom in worship.

A spirit of joyful spontaneity, freedom, and joyful exuberance often characterises a smaller church, in contrast to the restrained formality of larger churches. People often feel much freer to participate and enter into joyful worship in this less formal kind of environment.

RELEVANT AND PRACTICAL PREACHING. The same principles in respect of freedom and informality, hold true for preaching too. The pulpit of a large church often seems to paralyze the preacher and induce a formal style of preaching. The preaching aspect of a service is undoubtedly a highlight and an extremely influential feature.

I believe that people today are wanting to hear simple, relevant, and practical messages. The day for a formal, theological, treatise is gone. People want to know how to cope with the practical issues and problems of life. They want to hear something that will help them go into another workaday week with hope and inspiration.

SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES. Smaller groups lend themselves admirably to the enjoyment of fellowship and this should be experienced in a social dimension of relaxation as well as the more spiritual areas of activity.

Don't neglect opportunities to enjoy life together. Make opportunities to relax and enjoy diversions together. Organise some outings, picnics, fellowship meals together. The members are able to get to know each other much better during these occasions.

f: WHAT ABOUT A BUILDING? Obviously there are some real advantages in owning a building suitable and congenial for church activities. However, one of the mistakes which some small congregations frequently make is to over-estimate the advantages, and try to erect or purchase a building too soon. In today's world, land and buildings are very expensive items, and once a fellowship gets involved in obtaining them they frequently have no finances for anything else.

There are obviously things which are more important than a building and these should be established first. The main priority is the forming of a strong ministry team and the support base that this will require. Always try to form your ministry team with a prophetic eye to the future. Get a team capable of carrying you far beyond the immediate growth levels of the church. For instance, if you have 50 people in your congregation, endeavour to form a team capable of taking you to, and beyond the 250 mark. This kind of planning shows evidence of objective management rather than crisis management.

Also a young church should be coached into becoming a mission church, on both the home and overseas fronts, before it ties up all its available finances in real estate.

There are usually many types of buildings and facilities which churches can lease or rent until their congregations grows to a point where purchase seems much more feasible. School halls and facilities are the most obvious and frequently the most suitable. Many churches are also leasing ware-houses and finding this cost effective and manageable.

My counsel, to a young, growing congregation would be to avoid purchasing or building until the fellowship has grown to the size and financial income where it can afford to do so without severely straining the budget. Obtaining a suitable property will always be a big demand on the budget but try to avoid it being so severe that it will restrict all other activities.

g: THE TRANSITION TO A BIGGER CHURCH. As you concentrate prayerfully on "growing your small church", remember that most big churches started off like yours is today. It is a most rewarding and fulfilling experience to break through the growth barriers and be part of what once was a small and perhaps insignificant church, becoming a much larger, stronger, more influential and growing church. The ministry of Church Planting and

Church Growth is a challenging one which demands dedication, commitment and hard work. But nothing can be more rewarding than the joy of seeing people brought into God's Kingdom and growing up into Him in all things.

Chapter Four

YOUR CHURCH CAN GROW

Over the past twenty years, the "CHURCH GROWTH CONCEPT", has exploded upon the Christian world. All over the earth there are evidences that this is far more than a humanly contrived strategy. It is obviously part of a Divine, prophetic purpose. It is an indicator that the universal, end time harvest predicted by the major and minor prophets, is arriving in this our day.

This tremendous phenomena is most dramatically obvious in the developing nations of our world. Whilst the materialistic Western world is largely devoid of true spiritual revival, many of the nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America are experiencing dynamic, sweeping revival which is birthing millions of converts and thousands of new congregations. In many nations thousands of new congregations come into being every year and many of the established congregations are dramatically increasing in size.

The most remarkable example of this is the Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea, which now has upwards of 800,000 members. But there are thousands of other, less spectacular yet impressive examples of churches increasing rapidly in membership and influence. I firmly believe that in the next few decades Church Planting and Church Growth throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America will accelerate enormously. I further believe that the churches in these areas will launch great missionary endeavors into the Western world nations which will precipitate a world wide spiritual harvest of unprecedented proportions.

THE CHURCH GROWTH PHENOMENA IS HERE TO STAY.

- **Because Almighty God is the author of it.**
- **Because it is now the prophetic time for it.**

- **Because as the number of churches around the world increases they will sponsor more Church Planting and more Church Growth everywhere.**

- **Because the Bible predicts a world wide harvest to herald the return of Christ to reign.**

As we commence our study of Church Growth, let us ask ourselves again this basic question, what is a CHURCH?

We have already noted, in our study of Church Planting that :-

A: A Church is NOT a building.

B: It is NOT a religious Institution.

C: It is NOT a denomination.

D: It is NOT a religious activities centre.

A Church is not comprised of bricks and mortar, nor timber and iron. It is comprised of **PEOPLE. The Church is :-**

A "CALLED OUT" PEOPLE. (Ecclesia, = Called out.)

"Who has called you out of darkness. "

(Col. 1:13.)

A CALLED "INTO" PEOPLE.

"into the Kingdom of the Son of His love." (Col. 1 :13.)

"Who are called according to (into) His purposes." (Rom. 12:28.)

In Church Planting, and Church Growth, our primary purpose is to :-

a: Call people out of their darkness.

b: Into God's glorious Kingdom of light.

THE CHURCH IS :-

A redeemed people. Lk. 1:68. Gal. 3:13. 1 Pet. 1:18. Rev. 5:9.

A redemptive people. Matt. 5: 13-16. -salt and light to the world.

An active, Spirit empowered people. Acts 8:4.

A people destined to evangelise the world. Acts 1:8b. Psa.2:8.

OUR CALLING IS :-

a: A HEAVENLY CALLING. Heb. 3:1. *"partakers of the Heavenly calling."*

b: A HIGH CALLING. Phil. 3:14. *"the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."*

c: A HOLY CALLING. 2 Tim. 1:9. *"has called us with a holy calling."*

d: WE ARE CALLED INTO FELLOWSHIP. (Koinonia)
With Christ and His people. (1 Jn.1:3.)

e: WE ARE CALLED TO DISCIPLESHIP. Matt. 28:19, 20.

f: WE ARE CALLED TO BE WITNESSES. (Acts. 1:8.)

g: WE ARE CALLED TO BE MINISTERS. (Gal. 1:5.)

SOME PRE-REQUISITES FOR CHURCH GROWTH.

A: VISION. " Without a clear vision, the project flounders. "

B: DESIRE.

The church must WANT to grow.

You may say, "Doesn't every church want to grow?"

Sadly the answer is NO! -Some have a different priority!

Some have a REMNANT MENTALITY. Believing that the end time church will become a tiny remnant in a Godless world. They tend to believe that if a church is growing rapidly, it must be compromising some spiritual truth or quality. Some have an idea that we cannot have QUANTITY AND QUALITY, and they opt for what they believe is quality, claiming that smaller is always better quality.

Many churches have never been properly faced with the challenge of Church Growth.

Many churches do not know how to proceed towards Church Growth.

Some have tried to see their church grow and feel it has not worked.

Unfortunately, many churches are just not willing to pay the price required.

Some are unwilling to move out of their comfort zone.

MANY CHURCHES ARE FEARFUL TO ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE.

Afraid of failure and the possibility that "It may not work."

Afraid to accept the responsibilities of growth :-

- The extra work load created.
 - The additional finances required.
 - Responsibility for enlarging their premises.
- **The pastoral leadership must embrace the vision.**
 - **They must impart it to the people.**
 - **They must provide adequate training.**
 - **They must lead by example.**
 - **They must challenge and motivate the believers.**
 - **They must continually exhort and inspire them.**
 - **They must prayerfully maintain the momentum.**

C: DIRECTION.

"When you do not know where you are going, any road will get you there."

Every church needs a **VISION**, and **GOALS** i.e.
To know **where** you are going, and **how** you will get there.

THE VISION MUST BE RECEIVED FROM GOD.

It is not wise to wistfully imagine or fantasize, using your imagination to create a mental picture of what your church might grow into.

You must pray fervently about it.

You must empty your mind of pre-conceived ideas.

You must learn to "tune in" to God's Spirit.

You must share the vision with trusted fellow workers.

You should seek for the "unity of the Spirit" as a confirmation.

Pray positively about it, - bring it into focus.

Let the vision live within your spirit.

Commit it to writing with all specific details.

Talk positively about it, to yourself and your team members.

The VISION is spiritual. The GOALS are practical.
Clarify the vision, make sure it is :-

- INSPIRED.
- SPECIFIC.
- MEASURABLE.
- REALISTIC.
- ACHIEVABLE.

D: OUTLINING YOUR GOALS. (How you will attain your vision.)

A: HOW?

How will we realistically achieve this growth?
God does not have only one growth program, it may differ from one church to another. Find His purpose for YOUR situation.

B: WHEN?

When are we to commence this emphasis?
Establishing a time frame. Short and long term goals.

C: WITH WHOM?

Personnel. Who will be part of this program?
Who will lead the various phases?

D: WHAT?

What equipment will be needed?
What expenses will be incurred? Budget requirements?

C: DETERMINATION.

Church Growth is not a simple, undemanding task.
There will probably be obstacles, discouragement's, hindrances.
You will undoubtedly need determination to carry you through.

D: REVIEW AND ADJUSTMENT.

The program must be subject to consistent, periodic review with necessary adjustments and corrections for "fine tuning".

Chapter Five

THE MINISTRY OF EVANGELISM

"Do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry."
(2 Tim.4:5.)

These words, spoken by Paul to Timothy, are also applicable to every minister and every church. Unless each local church does the work of evangelism, it is not using its ministry potential properly nor fully.

Every Pastor and congregation should honestly and prayerfully assess their situation to see if they are fulfilling this injunction or whether they are failing God, themselves, and their community in this important matter.

EMPHASISING EVANGELISM.

Evangelism is the sharing, proclaiming, and declaring of good news, particularly the good news of Christ's salvation.

Evangelism is "reaping the harvest" for Christ and His Kingdom, and Church Growth cannot happen without it. It is the "bottom line" of Church Growth.

Some growth may occur in a church through biological increase, —(children born to your members) or transfer membership, —(Christians transferring their membership to your congregation) but genuine Church Growth cannot occur without real evangelism taking place. Only the conversion and conserving of new believers will make it happen, so you must :-

EMPHASISE EVANGELISM.

Witnessing to people and winning them to Christ is the one aspect of our ministry that we can only perform on this side of eternity. Once we reach God's presence we can praise and worship Him throughout eternity but we will not be able to win people to Him then. So if we are going to do it, we must **DO IT NOW.**

WHAT IS EVANGELISM?

The root meaning of the word is to share, proclaim, preach, announce, and declare the Good News of Christ's salvation.

WHY SHOULD WE EMPHASISE EVANGELISM?

Because God's salvation, procured through Christ's death and resurrection, is the underlying theme of the whole Bible. The thin red line of redemption runs

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through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Evangelism, the spreading of this Good News, is therefore the most important task that any human may undertake.

Evangelism is the very heart beat of God.
It was the sole reason for Christ's coming to this earth.
He came to purchase our redemption through His death and resurrection.
He came to *"seek and to save that which was lost."* (Luke. 19 :10.)
He came to find and rescue the sheep which was lost. (Luke. 15 :4.)

We should emphasise evangelism because :-
The Bible emphasizes it.
Jesus emphasizes it.
Every church which is growing and winning people to Christ emphasizes it.

We need to make our church members evangelism conscious.
By preaching on evangelism.
By teaching on evangelism.
By demonstrating evangelism.
By training the people in evangelism.

EVANGELISM, -INSIDE AND OUT.

Evangelism must occur both inside and outside our church.

a: INSIDE THE CHURCH WALLS.

EVANGELISTIC SERVICES.

Many churches have replaced their evangelistic service with celebrations, or praise and worship services and have retreated from the cutting edge of evangelism. They have opted for "deeper" type of meetings rather than a fervent evangelistic meeting. Many reasons, (excuses?) have been given for this kind of move, but I feel that the real reason is usually that non-Christians are not present in those churches in sufficient numbers to warrant a weekly evangelistic meeting. Pastors have realised that there is no point in preaching the simple Gospel to the saints every week and that it might be better to use that time to feed the saints.

The real solution would be for the members to become so active in witnessing that they would be bringing unbelievers into the church every week, thus filling the pool with fish. Pastor, why not think about using the Sunday evening service to train, or re-train your people in witnessing and evangelism? Then motivate them to actively bring people to Christ and to church. Turn your

Sunday night meeting back into a powerful Gospel meeting and believe to see God save many souls.

"USER FRIENDLY" EVANGELISTIC MEETINGS.

"User friendly" is a phrase which arrived with the computer age to describe computers and programs which are easy to use and easy to get along with. It could also be a good way to describe effective evangelistic meetings, make them also "user friendly", appealing to non-believers and pre-Christians.

User friendly meetings must have a warm atmosphere, and be joyful and positive. New comers should feel immediately welcome and this feeling should increase as the meeting proceeds. Some of the features which help to create such a meeting are :-

Happy, joyful, lively music.

A dynamic, Holy Ghost atmosphere where people sense the presence of God.

Relevant, easy to understand preaching.

Powerful altar calls where people are urged to commit themselves to Christ.

Friendly, helpful counsellors to pray with them

A sound "follow up system." to establish new believers in their Faith.

SEEKER SERVICES.

Some churches, the best known being Willow Creek Community Church, near Chicago, under Pastor Bill Hybels, have recently specialised in "Seeker Services." These are meetings specifically tailored for non-believers. They are deliberately non-religious in character. They are not worship services, and the people are seen as an audience, rather than a congregation. The meetings feature a great deal of drama presentation when the Gospel is dramatically presented in various formats. This kind of presentation is not easy to do in any church which is not already large and has the right kind of facilities.

However, the idea of "seeker oriented services" is one which every church might seriously consider. Beginning with serious consideration of "How user friendly are our services?" And, "How can we make our meetings more attractive to non-believers without compromising spiritual standards?"

SOUL WINNERS SEMINARS.

One obvious way to make the people soul winning conscious is to conduct some seminars, work shops, and training programs on the subject. Advertise them well. Urge the people to attend. Make it as easy as possible for them to come. Aim to get whole families involved in the program.

Why not take them through the manual, "**You can be a real Winner.**" ? This could also be a prelude to conducting a Church Planters Training Program in your church.

Train the people in altar work and counselling.

Train them in the art of personal witness.

Set an example for them by being a faithful witness and bringing others to Christ.

Remember that the shepherd not only cares for the ninety and nine. Having ensured their safety, He goes out into the night to seek for the one sheep which is lost. (Luke. 15 :4.)

b: OUTSIDE THE CHURCH PROPERTY.

EVANGELISM THROUGH THE CELL GROUPS.

We have already strongly advocated the formation of cell groups within the local church. These dynamic small groups provide an excellent environment for nurturing and discipling new believers. However, they also provide an excellent base for evangelism too.

Many people will come to a house meeting who would not enter a church.

The cell group is usually much closer to them than is the church.

The atmosphere is less religious than that of a church.

The numbers are smaller, - less threatening.

The atmosphere is more informal.

Enjoyable evenings, meals, parties, videos, can be enjoyed.

Instead of using the cell group simply as a pastoral, or caring medium, insist on it being an evangelistic outreach. Keep the emphasis on reaching and winning people. Encourage the members to keep this uppermost in their minds.

COMMUNITY SERVICES.

Many communities have public services where needy and lonely people are often to be found. I refer to hospitals, aged person's homes, orphanages, prisons, handicapped persons homes or schools, etc. Most of these places are usually needing volunteer workers in some capacity and provide a wonderful opportunity for Christians to serve their less fortunate brethren. Friendship evangelism can often be accomplished in these situations but it needs to be done with tact and discretion. Some over zealous Christians can become more of a problem than a blessing. But look at your community and prayerfully consider which aspects of it may hold potential as a mission field for evangelism. There are also services like 'meals on wheels' and other

community service programs in which some Christians may assist and at the same time find opportunity for wise and tactful ways to spread the Good News.

EVERY CHURCH A SOUL WINNING CENTRE.

There is really no biblical reason why every church, no matter how small or large, should not be a Soul Winning Centre. The responsibility for this lies largely with the pastor and his team. A local church usually follows the lead and example of the pastor. His responsibility before God is to provide the lead and direction for that church.

1. MAKE A THOROUGH AND HONEST APPRAISAL.

"Where are we, and where do we go from here?"

Before we can begin to make positive and productive changes we must thoroughly evaluate our present condition. We may sub-consciously or innately realise that our church is not making great progress or achieving remarkable growth, but before we can remedy this we need to conduct a thorough and specific examination. Examination precedes diagnosis, and diagnosis precedes prognosis or cure. We need to examine the vital life signs.

In the course of a medical examination the Doctor will examine the pulse, blood pressures, respiration etc. These are the vital signs of life. What might be the vital life signs of a church? Here are some suggestions :-

- A: LIFE.** (Animation, vigour, vitality, vivacity, spirit, energy.)
- B: ACTIVITY.** (Useful, fruitful, productive activities.)
- C: STRENGTH.** (Spiritual strength of the believers.)
- D: GROWTH.** (Growing up into Christ and spiritual maturity.)
- E: REPRODUCTION.** (Producing after one's kind. Gen. 1:11,12.)

Healthy growth is always multi-directional.

E.G. A plant or tree grows :-

UPWARD, Reaching towards the sun.

DOWNWARD, reaching down into the soil.

OUTWARD, in developing maturity and fruitfulness.

If it only grew upwards, without thrusting its root system into the ground at a commensurate rate, it could not stand for long. Growth that is not "balanced" is likely to collapse.

Jesus also exhibited multi-directional growth. Luke 2:52.

"and Jesus grew in

Wisdom, (Mental and intellectual development.) and

Stature, (Physical, bodily growth.) and in
Favour with God, (Spiritual growth and development) and
Favour with man. " (Social, inter-personal development.)

Church Growth is NOT simply a matter of increasing numbers or church attendance figures. It is not only a matter of **QUANTITY**, but also of **QUALITY**.

So the church should be growing and developing in several directions simultaneously :-

- In spiritual maturity. Eph. 4:15.
- In fellowship. Acts. 2:41-47. Eph. 4:1-6, 15.
- In ministries. Rom. 12: 3-8.
- In the exercise of spiritual gifts. 1 Cor. 12, -14.
- In witnessing and preaching. Acts. 1:8. Mk. 16: 15-20.
- In making disciples. 2 Tim. 2:1,2.
- Church Planting. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, uttermost earth.
- In missionary activity. Matt. 28:19,20.

SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS.

- 1: How do we measure up to the vital life signs?
- 2: Apart from biological and transfer growth, at what % rate are we growing?
- 3: Is our true growth rate exciting and satisfactory? Yes / No?

A DETERMINED RESPONSE.

God wants this church to grow in every way.

We want to discover His ways, cooperate with Him, and see it grow.

We will prayerfully discover and own His vision for our church and community.

By His grace, and with His help, this church is headed for dynamic growth.

2. COMMITTED TO THE VISION.

In a cooperative effort, such as Church Growth demands, everyone involved must be fully committed to the vision. That is :-

- Fully believe in it..
- See it as God's purpose for their Fellowship..
- Feel that they are an integral and important part of it..
- Commit themselves to whole hearted involvement in it..
- Be available to play whatever role the vision requires.
- Pray regularly for it.
- Be willing to invest finances, tithes, and offerings into it.

It is not sufficient to recognise it as "The Pastor's vision", or "The Church's vision". They must acknowledge it as -"**OUR VISION.**"

To achieve such a vision, the following things must happen :-

THE PASTOR (S)

Must wholly believe that God wants their church to grow.
Must gain a vision of what their church can become in God's purpose.
Must formulate realistic goals as to how this can happen.
Must have the love, respect, and confidence of the members.
Must clearly communicate the vision to them and win their involvement.

THE MEMBERSHIP.

Must love and respect their leaders and be eager to work with them
Must be excited about their church and believe in its future.
Must be convinced that Christ is the answer to all life's problems.
Must open their hearts and their pockets to fulfill the vision.
Must become wholly involved in whatever capacity is appropriate.

THE VISION MUST BE :-

INSPIRED, Bearing indications of Divine inspiration.
DEFINED, and carefully thought through.
CLARIFIED, and clearly communicated.
EXCITING AND CHALLENGING.
REALISTIC AND ACHIEVABLE.
CAPABLE OF INVOLVING AND USING ALL AVAILABLE PERSONNEL.

THE LEADERSHIP AND MEMBERS SHOULD FACE THE FOLLOWING :-

- Do we truly want the church to grow?
- Are we willing to pay the price, whatever that might be?
- Do we truly have a vision for the growth of our church?
- Do we have a program of goals which will make it happen?
- Are we open to the changes which are inevitable?
- What are some of the things which would result in growth activity?
- What can I personally do to be effectively involved?
- What changes need to occur in our services to make them more attractive to strangers?
- Are we willing to allow the Holy Spirit to be Lord of our church?
- Will we be willing to attribute all the honour and praise to God alone?

Have the whole leadership and membership go through this list together.
Challenge every person to make their personal response to it.

Present it in some form of document so that each person can sign and retain it as a covenant of commitment.

ENTITLE IT, " **OUR COMMITMENT TO CHANGE AND GROWTH.** "

3. WHAT IS EVANGELISM?

Preaching and teaching will be required on the theme of evangelism to set the stage for new emphasis on reaching and retaining people for Christ.

Here are some simple definitions. evangelism is :-

- Sharing the Good News about Jesus with others who do not know Him.
- Presenting the Good News to as many people as possible to bring them to a saving knowledge of Him.
- Evangelism is bringing Christ to others, and others to Christ.
- Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to get bread.

SOME OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WORDS RELATING TO EVANGELISM

a: EVANGELISE: (evangelizo) Acts. 8:4. *"Therefore, the believers which were scattered abroad went everywhere **preaching** the message."*

b: WITNESS: (martureo, = martyrs.) Acts. 1:8. *"And you shall be **witnesses** unto Me, in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth."*

c: PROCLAIM: (kerusso) Acts.8:5. *"Philip went down to Samaria and **proclaimed** Christ to them."*

d: ANNOUNCE: (katangelo) Acts. 17:3. *"This Jesus whom I **announce** unto you, is the Christ."*

e: REASON: (dialagomi) Acts. 17:2. *"Paul **reasoned** with them out of the scriptures."*

f: PERSUADE: (peitho) Acts. 18:4. *"And Paul reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and **persuaded** both Jews and Greeks."*

g: MAKE DISCIPLES. (matheteusate) Matt. 28: 19. *"Go ye therefore and **make disciples** of all nations."*

THE PROCESSES OF EVANGELISM HAVE BEEN PERCEIVED IN THE FOLLOWING SEQUENCE:-

- **PRESENCE.**

The presence of a Christian is in itself, an evangelising factor. Through the life of a believer (witness), the pre-Christian has opportunity to see the Gospel lived out. We may be the only epistle that some people will ever read.

- **PRE-EVANGELISM.**

Is the preparatory work which must be done before the Gospel can be persuasively presented. This may involve friendship evangelism, where the believers genuinely befriend non believers. It involves earning credibility for the Gospel by your life, love, interest and compassion. In agricultural terms it is the clearing, ploughing and preparing of the ground before the work of sowing can begin.

- **PROCLAMATION. (or Presentation.)**

This is the actual presentation of the Gospel when the person or target group is brought face to face with the Gospel of Christ. It is the presentation of the Gospel message in the clearest possible manner so that the hearers are fully informed of the truth and implications of the Good News about Jesus.

- **PERSUASION.**

The aspect of presentation in which the person is actively persuaded to make a positive decision and response to the message. The Holy Spirit is actively involved and is the main factor in the persuasion process. Without His influence the persuasion is powerless. However, we the witness, must also be personally involved. The Holy Spirit will work through us. We therefore persuade men, on Christ's behalf, to be reconciled to God.

- **INTEGRATION.**

This involves the various steps necessary to get the new converts integrated into a local fellowship. The Holy Spirit inducts them into the Body of Christ spiritually. But we must also encourage them into the Body practically. In many ways catching the fish is the easiest part. Keeping it and cleaning it is often the aspect requiring more patience, prayer and sacrifice. Particularly in the local church, real effort must be made to welcome the new believers, make room for them, involve them, place them in fellowship groups, follow up their commitment, and begin to build on their newly laid foundation.

- **REPRODUCTION.**

The process of evangelism is not really complete until the new believer begins to "reproduce after their kind." New believers must immediately be made aware of their responsibility and privilege to share their testimony and faith with others. They must be encouraged and motivated to bring others to Christ. This cannot begin too soon. In fact the longer it is left, the harder it may become. Jesus told a new believer: "Go home and tell what great things the Lord has done for you." New believers usually make the best soul winners.

- There is an infectious enthusiasm in their new love relationship.
- They still have vital contact with their unconverted friends.
- The process of evangelism as they experienced it, is still fresh in their mind.
- They are much more aware of non-church culture, language, expectations.
- They relate much more easily to the pre-Christian community.

4. IS YOUR CHURCH INTROVERT, OR EXTROVERT?

The reason why many churches fail to see growth is that have become introvert in their attitudes and programs. The meaning of introvert is, "being primarily concerned with one's own thoughts and interests".

Sadly, many churches have become like this. They have become little "Bless me clubs". Their programs, activities and plans are all primarily for the benefit of their members. Most of them are not consciously aware of this. They did not plan to become this way and are usually oblivious to the fact that they have become detached from the real life of their world. They unwittingly bear the marks of a recluse who has fled involvement in the real world to find isolation in a make believe one. They have created a "religious comfort zone", in which

splendid isolation they faithfully practice their religious activities. They become inbred and unfruitful, making all kinds of "spiritual excuses" for their lack of outreach activity and growth.

In contrast, one of the definitions of extrovert is, "**mainly concerned with external (outside) things.**" This is the meaning with which I am concerned rather than the meaning frequently applied in which an extrovert is an "outrageously outgoing person."

The Church of Jesus Christ was never intended to be isolated and insulated from the world. It was intended to be a "Church without walls". Remember that the true Church is not a building, it is a redeemed and redemptive people. A pro-active people who go out into their world to assert the influence of the Kingdom. To conquer the enemy of mankind, and rescue men and women from the grip of their adversary.

We must certainly be dedicated to making our churches "user friendly". Creating an atmosphere and environment of open friendliness which makes new people feel abundantly welcome, at ease, and keen to return. Try to see your church through the eyes of a pre-Christian stranger! How do they see you, your activities and programs? Can they interpret and understand the religious ritual and tradition in which you may be involved. Can they understand the religious language which is frequently used in many churches? Is your message relevant and meaningful to their real needs. Is your Gospel truly **GOOD NEWS** to them in the situations of their life?

5. REMOVING THE INERTIA FACTORS.

Many churches appear to have imposed inertia factors which slow down, hinder, or even totally prevent any outgoing activity. Trying to get some churches moving is like driving a car with the hand brake firmly on. The average congregation has been conditioned to "sit down, keep quiet, and be good listeners."

Even the traditional structure of most church buildings, with platform, pulpit and pews, suggests that this is the main function of a church. The people have become content to attend church faithfully week by week to listen to sermons. This never was, and never will be what God intended for His Church. It is in complete contrast to the Church which the Holy Spirit commissioned on the Day of Pentecost. We must shake off this apathy and inactivity, arouse ourselves and do the work of evangelism, - Telling the lost that Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life. If all the Christian congregations around the world would become active in evangelism, the world could be won in a short time. Unfortunately the Army of the Lord is sleeping soundly in the barracks. We must sound the awake call.

Three most prevalent inertia factors are :-

- A: FEAR, OR TIMIDITY.
- B: IGNORANCE. Not knowing how to go about evangelising.
- C: INEXPERIENCE. Not having done it sufficiently to gain confidence.

How can we shake off this inertia? By :-

- POWERFULLY CHALLENGING THE PEOPLE.
- BEING AN INSPIRING EXAMPLE TO THEM.
- PROVIDING TRAINING AND MOTIVATION.
- ORGANISING OUTREACH ACTIVITIES.
- MAKING THE CHURCH "USER FRIENDLY."
- KEEPING THE GROWTH EMPHASIS BEFORE THE PEOPLE.

6. ENCOURAGING THE FRIENDSHIP FACTOR.

One of the sad features of assimilation of new believers into the Christian community is the manner in which their previous relationships with family and friends are frequently discarded and their new life involves only contact with fellow Christians. Now I realise that there has to come a "separation from the world, unto Christ", but I do not believe that this necessarily means that the new believers have to sever contact or disassociate themselves from their former social structure. If possible it is better for them to maintain meaningful contact and association in order to impact their acquaintances with the Gospel.

This is frequently called, "OIKOS EVANGELISM." The Greek word "oikos" is translated - **family, kindred, household**, (including servants) or **own**. Many who came to Christ in the New Testament were the oikos of a new convert. So oikos evangelism happens when a new convert reaches his family, associates and friends with the Gospel to bring them to Christ. This happened to Andrew. (John. 1:40,41.) *"One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah'."*

Many modern surveys on Church Growth have revealed that this method of evangelism is still the most fruitful style. A typical survey revealed the following about how people first came to church.

REASONS WHY PEOPLE FIRST CAME TO CHURCH.

In response to advertising.	2%
Because of the pastor.	6%
Through organised evangelistic outreach.	6%
Influence of friends and relatives.	86%
This kind of response seems to be reasonably consistent.	

7. MENDING YOUR NETS.

Eph. 4:12. says that the primary work of the ministers is the "equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry."

The Greek word translated "equipping", - "katatismos", is interpreted several different ways in other parts of Scripture.

One analogy is the setting of a broken bone, carefully joining the bone together again to restore its usefulness, strength, and effectiveness.

Another idea conveyed is that of "mending nets", to make them effective to their true purpose.

Many churches need to either mend or change their nets to make them effective for catching fish. (men, women, boys and girls.) Let us look briefly at some of these nets :-

A: WELCOMING NEW PEOPLE.

How effectively, or otherwise, does your church welcome new people?

Do you have people specially appointed to do this who can function effectively?

New comers should be warmly welcomed even outside the church.

They must be welcomed again at the door upon entering.

Someone should graciously help them to find a seat where they feel comfortable.

Others might have a ministry of sitting with new comers quietly helping them to understand and enjoy the service.

They should also be welcomed from the pulpit and perhaps presented with some souvenir of their visit.

Try to discreetly obtain their name and address for further contact.

Plan and structure your services so that pre-Christians will feel part of them.

B: WORSHIP.

The "worship", in many churches is very somber and serious.

The liturgy, (order of service) is extremely complicated, making people feel outsiders.

Such traditional, religious activities are often very uninspiring and depressive.

The church ought to be the happiest place in town.

Worship can be reverent without being slow, heavy, and tedious.

Avoid those solemn, slow, religious kind of hymns.

Include music which is joyful, uplifting, and inspiring.

Have the kind of celebrations to which people cannot wait to come back.

C: PREACHING AND TEACHING.

There is a mistaken idea in many church circles that good preaching and teaching has to be a serious, somber, heavy duty activity. I feel certain that the ministry of Jesus was not like that. Nor was the fiery preaching of John the Baptist, or of Paul, Peter and other Bible preachers. Their preaching was relevant, dynamic and contemporary. It was said of Jesus that the "common (average) people heard Him gladly." In other words they found his teaching to be gripping and enthralling. He addressed the real, felt needs in their lives and presented ways in which their burdens could be lightened and they could experience rest and peace.

Good, effective Gospel preaching should never be negative and condemnatory. Even preaching the need for repentance can be done in a positive manner. People today are saddled with many and varied problems. They need to hear positive, constructive and helpful messages which will help them to find peace with God, with themselves and with their neighbour. Certainly good preaching should never be boring, -something which people must endure. Spice your messages with graphic illustrations. Speak about things with which people can readily identify. Never use religious jargon, phrases and words which no one but the initiated can understand. Aim to use every day language which the average person can readily understand and identify with.

MAKING AN ALTAR CALL. - (Inviting people to receive Christ.)

Part of the success of an effective Gospel preacher is the ability to motivate people to a decision at the end of his message. Here are some of the factors of which you need to be conscious :-

a: **TIME FACTOR.** Timing is critical. Be sensitive about when to conclude your message and begin the appeal.

b: **ENERGY FACTOR.** Don't exhaust yourself, or your listeners.

c: **SMOOTHNESS FACTOR.** Carry through smoothly from your message, into the appeal. Plan your appeal as you plan your message. How much time do you spend preparing your message? Do you spend even half as much time preparing the appeal?

d: **SPIRITUAL FACTOR.** Be led of the Spirit. Generally the one who has preached should also give the appeal.

e: **EMOTIONAL FACTOR.** Don't be afraid of applying this and the music which can touch the emotions. People are emotive beings and most decisions have some legitimate emotional factor.

f: **FAITH FACTOR.** Believe for results, envision them, expect them and get them.

g: **VARIETY FACTOR.** Be flexible, not predictable. Use your sanctified imagination as you ask God to show you how to influence people towards Him.

D: EVANGELISM.

Paul encouraged Timothy to make the greatest use of his pastoral ministry by "doing the work of an evangelist." (2 Tim. 4:5.) Every preacher, irrespective of his particular gifting, should introduce some evangelistic emphasis into his ministry. Every service can hold the potential of an evangelistic outcome if the preacher slants his message in that direction and concludes every meeting by giving pre-Christians a chance to confess Christ as Saviour and Lord. Once your congregation becomes aware of this emphasis they will feel more confident to invite friends and associates to join them in church regardless of what type of meeting it is planned to be.

There are many other effective ways in which evangelistic emphasis can be introduced into your church and program. Be creative about it. Ask God to show you new and different ways in which people can be reached and won. Unless you make this special kind of emphasis, your church is never likely to grow and you will miss the thrill and fulfillment of seeing what God can accomplish among you.

E: SPECIALISED GROUPS.

There are numerous categories of human need which can be ministered to by giving opportunity for people to meet with other believers who face similar problems, e.g. "single mother's", "single persons", "deaf ministries", "senior citizens", etc. Other specialised groups which would require more attention, facilities and specialised workers are ministries to drug dependent people, care groups for persons who have experienced nervous breakdowns and similar ministries of compassion and care.

F: CELL CHURCH GROUPS.

Cell groups are ideal settings for accomplishing various aspects of ministry which cannot be properly catered for in the larger celebration type of gathering. This style of structure will be very much in evidence in the churches of the future and we will devote more space to this subject later in the Manual.

G: YOUTH MINISTRIES.

The needs of young people today are much more complex than previously. All over the world the youth of our nations are facing greater challenges and temptations than ever before. This requires a different approach, and emphasis than the more general church activities. It is essential and urgent that the church reaches and wins the youth of our nations. Many have said that

they are "the church of tomorrow", but that is not true. They are THE CHURCH OF TODAY. It could well be said that, - "WHO WINS THE YOUTH OF TODAY, WINS THE WORLD OF TOMORROW." Every church needs to be acutely conscious of this great challenge and especially determined to take all necessary steps to ensure an effective program for young people.

H: CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES.

What we have just said about the youth applies even more so to the children of our world. This is one of the most neglected mission fields in the world today. Yet this is surely a most strategic and highly important field. It is an area of mission into which I strongly believe every church should pour effort and passion. There are several good reasons why this is so :-

- Our world today has a very high percentage of children.
- They are faced with all manner of temptations and challenges.
- In many ways, children are much easier to win for Christ..
- "Save an adult and you save a soul. Save a child and you save a life"

For some strange reason children's ministries are usually the most neglected of all yet it is really the easiest to conduct and in many ways the most fruitful and fulfilling. You should prayerfully determine that this will be different in your church. Believe for some qualified and dedicated children's ministry workers and make every effort to make this the biggest department in your church.

8. BUILDING A CHURCH GROWTH "POWER-HOUSE".

The most effective church that ever existed began in a prayer meeting.
(Acts. 1 & 2.)

The churches experiencing dynamic growth today emphasise prayer.

"More things are accomplished by prayer than this world dreams of."

I believe that the most powerfully strategic thing that any church that longs to grow can do initially, is to start a prayer group dedicated to pray for growth and increase.

- It need not be a large group to begin with.
- The leader must be the right person, possibly the pastor himself.
- It must be SPECIFICALLY praying for growth and increase.
- It must be a DEDICATED group, taking this role seriously.
- The members must be in right RELATIONSHIP.
- It should be an INFORMED group, knowledgeable about the church's program.
- It must be a group with the VISION firmly before them.

- Make sure it consists of people of FAITH who really believe God.
- People of genuine HUMILITY, who will give honour to the Lord.

9. USING ALL YOUR RESOURCES.

The ***greatest resource*** in any church is its ***members***.

The ***least utilised resource*** in any church is its ***members!***

Many pastors talk and teach a great deal about the "many membered body", but few of them demonstrate a genuine belief and confidence in those members. This is confirmed by the fact that they rarely ever use them to their fullest advantage. The church has an army, which is virtually "confined to barracks." There are people in almost every congregation who have skills and abilities which could be advantageously employed for the advancement of the Kingdom if the pastors would recruit, train and motivate them. The greatest single thing which any pastor can do is to get his members into harness and working in their various capacities for the extension of God's Kingdom.

THE CHURCH THAT PLANS TO GROW MUST FULLY UTILISE ITS GREATEST RESOURCE, - ITS MEMBERS.

- Begin a series of teachings on the importance of BODY MINISTRIES.
- Actively search for potential leaders in your congregation.
- Invite them to some special gatherings for leadership training.
- Begin to encourage, disciple, and mentor them.
- Begin to use them in relatively small ways.
- As they develop and mature, try to use them increasingly.
- Encourage the congregation to respect and honour these ministries.

Once you have your greatest resource, - your members, trained, there are many other resources you can develop.

START A VISITATION PROGRAM using your newly trained leaders to do the visitation.

Give them specific training on the ministry of visitation. Assign some to :-

- PASTORAL VISITATION. Visiting various members in need, sickness, problems etc.
- NEW CONVERT VISITATION. Following up new believers in their homes.
- EVANGELISTIC VISITATION. Visiting homes of prospects with a view to leading them to Christ.

HOUSE CHURCH PROGRAMS.

Church Planting International
PO Box 250, Mt. Gravatt, Queensland 4122, Australia

Organise outreach meetings in the various suburbs of your town, using the houses of your leaders for the venues. Let your newly trained leaders assume the oversight of them encouraging them to make these gatherings "Recruiting Centres" for the Kingdom.

The senior pastor(s) must retain the overall oversight of these outreaches, the local leader being an "under shepherd." Let the local leader realise that he or she, is a part of your pastoral team. Foster and encourage a strong "team spirit", amongst all the leadership. Encourage authority, submission, and respect of leadership amongst them.

SPECIAL "GUEST SERVICES."

- Plan to have a monthly guest service in the main church congregation.
- Encourage every member to bring a "guest".
- Precede the meeting with an informal meal where everyone can meet and mingle.
- Try to have a "guest speaker."
- Bring in a guest singer, or some guest to give a dynamic testimony.
- Make the service a dynamic evangelistic emphasis service.
- Conclude with a strong call for salvation.

10. REPRODUCING AFTER YOUR KIND.

Determine to be an outreach church which plants "daughter" churches. One of the clearest signs of healthy maturity is that of reproduction. God designed the human race to reproduce but it requires healthy development and a measure of maturity to achieve the reproduction stage. Write into your church vision, at the earliest opportunity that your fellowship is a Church Planting fellowship.

Chapter Six

STRATEGISING FOR CHURCH GROWTH

The very word strategy seems to intimidate some pastors. They seem to feel that it implies a reliance upon human effort rather than upon God. The fact is that God Himself is a strategist and if we are to help fulfill His purposes, we too will need to become strategists.

1: WHAT IS STRATEGY ?

Here are some simple, brief definitions :-

"To determine a long term plan or policy."

"The policy chosen in order to accomplish a specific task."

"The methods employed to achieve a particular purpose."

Here are some words which the dictionary offers to describe strategy :-
PLAN, SCHEME, SYSTEM, TACTICS, METHODS, PROCEDURE.

Strategy is a word which is frequently used in terms of tactics of war. It is the art of deploying troops, ships, aircraft, etc, into favourable positions from which to inflict defeat upon the enemy.

A Strategy is a well conceived, long term plan designed to achieve a consistent and lasting result.

So strategising involves :-

- Examining the situation.
- Prescribing solutions.
- Determining tactics.
- Employing procedures.
- Monitoring effectiveness.
- Adjusting the methods.
- Achieving the goals.

2: WHY DO WE NEED TO STRATEGISE FOR CHURCH GROWTH?

The idealist may say, "If God wants the Church to grow it will do so without our plans and efforts."

The plain fact is that God Himself is a strategist. He formed a strategy for the redemption of mankind. The Bible tells us that this was formulated, "Before the foundation of the world."

"Christ was indeed foreordained before the foundation of the world." 1Pet.1 :20.

"The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Rev. 13:8.

"God chose us in Christ, before the foundations of the world."

Eph. 1 :4.

"The Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matt.25:34.

- GOD FORMED A PLAN BEFORE THE EARTH WAS CREATED.

Eph. 1 :4.

- JESUS WAS ORDAINED TO HIS REDEMPTIVE TASK.

Rev. 13:8.

- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS DEEPLY INVOLVED IN THE STRATEGY OF REDEMPTION.

The Holy Spirit is the agent of redemption who empowers and energises those ordained by God to build and extend the Church.

- THE STRATEGY OF THE CHURCH WAS FORE-ORDAINED IN ETERNITY.

The whole history of the Church, from its inception to conclusion was planned in minute detail even before the world began. In the prophetic purposes of God it will fulfill every aspect of God's eternal purpose. It is a sobering thought to contemplate that God will fulfill His purpose, with or without, our cooperation. The aspect which our cooperation and faith will determine is what role we may be privileged to play in His purposes.

- JESUS GAVE THE CHURCH A CLEAR STRATEGY.

Acts. 1 :8.

THE OBJECTIVE: Reaching the entire world with the Gospel.

THE STRATEGY: (His disciples would accomplish the task.)

THE METHOD. (The disciples would proclaim the Gospel.)

THEIR AUTHORITY. (Lo I am with you always)

SHORT TERM GOAL. (In Jerusalem.)

MEDIUM RANGE GOAL. (Judea, and Samaria.)

LONG TERM GOAL. (Uttermost parts of the earth.)

TIME FRAME. (even to the end of the Ages)

THE CHURCH IS DESTINED TO GROW AND INHERIT THE KINGDOM.

Jesus said, "***Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give to you the Kingdom.***" Luke. 12 :32. The Church, as a vital part of the "seed of Abraham", is destined to inherit the Kingdom and be a blessing to all nations of earth.

3: TEN STEPS TO ACHIEVING AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY.

3.1 REALISTIC ASSESSMENT. This first step requires absolute objective honesty. It is essential to analyse your past and present situation. To ask, and answer, some very pertinent questions about your church's progress, or lack of. e.g.

A: How long has your church been in existence?

B: What is the size of the present active membership?

C: Divide B. by A, = Growth per year of existence.

D: Portray this trend on a graph. How does it look?

E: What immediate action should be taken?

3.2 FORWARD PROJECTION. If the present trend continues, where will your church be in 10 years? If the growth factor is minimal, particularly in terms of young people being added, the church may not be here in ten years from now. If the growth rate is anything less than exciting and satisfactory, you need to urgently formulate a new strategy.

3.3 DEFINITE DECISIONS. The church leadership must prayerfully decide to find a new, effective, productive strategy. Some hard, definitive decisions need to be made NOW. Someone needs to "bite the bullet." Acknowledging that present trends are far from satisfactory and a new and vital strategy is urgently required is the first step towards a solution.

3.4 ANALYSE THE OBJECTIVES. Serious, positive, prayerful consideration must be given to the real objectives of the church. A fresh analysis of "Why are we here? What are we supposed to be achieving? Are

we succeeding? If not, why not? " A new statement of purpose needs to be formulated. Probably a time of repentance is needed in which we acknowledge before God that we have not been fulfilling His mandate as we should. Then let's clarify the objectives again. List them, hold them before God in prayer. Cry out for His help to achieve them. Understand right now that no human strategy is going to meet the need or accomplish the task. We need God given objectives and a God given strategy. We need to aim for His objectives, and the fulfillment of His purposes.

3.5 DESCRIBE THE SOLUTION. The objectives are, "Where are we heading for?" The solution is "How shall we get there?" So we need some specifics in our solution. It is not sufficient to make vague statements like, "We are going to grow." We need to find out from God just how He will cause us to grow. We need to wait upon Him until some specifics start to come into focus. If we are sincere and honest, God will start to share some specifics with us. As we whole-heartedly follow through on these, the Holy Spirit will pave the way for growth and development. Quite often He will begin with a time of cleansing and pruning. Sometimes, when God begins to work in a congregation, some will rise up against what He is doing. Some will become unhappy. Some may actually leave the church. Unfortunately this is often necessary before God can begin to bring growth to that church.

3.6 EXAMINE THE MOTIVES. At this point the issue of motive is often brought into focus. It is foundational to revival and growth that the motives be honest and righteous. There are sometimes many carnal reasons why a pastor or leadership may want their church to grow. It may be out of a carnal sense of ego, or religious pride. It may be a desire to achieve something, to be admired or envied. Obviously these are all unworthy motives which God will never bless and no amount of strategising or planning will make anything worth-while happen in these conditions.

3.7 DEFINE THE STRATEGY. Remember that strategy is "Forward planning". Looking into the future. Determining the possibilities in God. Formulating a strategy, plan, tactics, which will cause growth to occur. Such a strategy must not be abstract. **IT MUST INVOLVE SPECIFICS.** Your God ordained future, and that of your Church, **IS FILLED WITH SPECIFICS.** How your Church can grow. The methods which can bring about such growth. When the growth may begin. Who should be involved. The specifics will refer to

- **HOW?**
- **WHEN?**
- **WHAT?**
- **WITH WHOM?**

The specifics will include, numbers, size, dates, costs, etc.

It will include short term goals, long term goals and specify the time element in which these should happen.

3.8 EVALUATE THE RESULTS. Your strategy should include some principles and ways for consistent evaluations to be made. This will require statistics to be kept, including attendance at all meetings and events. Number of persons making a commitment to Christ. Number of persons baptised in water, and in the Holy Spirit. All these facts will be part of the vision for growth and must be faithfully recorded and regularly evaluated. e.g Your first year goal of seeing 250 brought to Christ can be monitored each month because it will mean an average of 5 persons per week, or 20 persons per month must be making commitments if your goal is to be realised.

3.9 RE-ALIGN THE PROGRAM. According to the results which are being achieved, or may not be realised, adjustments can be made in the program. New personnel may be brought in, new methods employed, adjustments made here and there, and a fine tuning of the strategy effected. These adjustments are like "in-flight corrections", they can only be made once the program is moving and you have opportunity to monitor its real effectiveness. These kind of adjustments cannot be made in your initial forward planning strategy. They only become evident when the program is actually in use.

3.10 REWARD THE WORKERS. As the new strategy goes forward and some desired results achieved, the "team spirit" of the leadership needs to be kept in good condition. This kind of growth can only be realised and sustained by a team and one which is working in good harmony together. For this reason it is essential that the workers are able to share in the rewards and the "spoils of victory". Each member should be recognised and due appreciation afforded. The achievements and advances can only be made when each member is effectively fulfilling their role.

4: DISTINCT BENEFITS OF A SOUND STRATEGY.

- 4.1 You know where you are going.**
- 4.2 Your church knows where it is going.**
- 4.3 You can foster a good team spirit.**
- 4.4 You can utilise more workers.**
- 4.5 You can share the work load more effectively.**
- 4.6 You can multiply efficiency through delegation.**
- 4.7 You can require more effective accountability.**
- 4.8 You can monitor results more accurately.**
- 4.9 You can make corrections and adjustments en- route.**
- 4.10 You know when you have achieved your goal.**

5: ARE STATISTICS REALLY NECESSARY?

Some pastors and churches have an aversion to numbers and statistics claiming that "counting is carnal", and they sometimes quote God's judgement on Israel when King David numbered the nation. (1 Chron.1:21) But it was David's *motive* which God judged, not his *action*, for God had actually commanded Moses to number the nation in Numbers. 1 :1,2. So beware of using numbers for purposes of pride or self gratification, but realise also that statistics can be legitimate and helpful. The history of the early church, (Acts of Apostles) is replete with numbers and documented statistics.

Numbers and statistics are :-

Measurable.

Universally understandable.

Accurate and reliable.

Indicators of progress. (or otherwise.)

They make possible:-

Accurate accountability.

Effective stewardship.

Effectual accomplishment.

6: THE POWER OF GOAL SETTING.

Once again, as with our comments on statistics, there are many pastors who have an aversion to goal setting. (This aversion to statistics and goal setting is frequently amongst those who need to give serious consideration to both. It often covers an unwillingness to face up to the realities of an unsatisfactory performance record.) The proven fact is that without the use of goal projections and forward planning, few things of value would ever be accomplished.

Here are some basic comments to consider.

6.1 GOAL SETTING IS BIBLICAL.

Paul frequently uses sporting analogies to depict the manner in which he pursued his spiritual life. He speaks about running the race with patience and determination. No runner can do this unless his goal is clear, to reach the finishing line ahead of his competitors. In all the disciplines required of a serious athlete, the setting of goals is essential to success.

6.2 GOAL SETTING IS POSITIVE AND PRODUCTIVE.

The human being is structured in such a way that we can only perform and achieve effectively if we have a clear sense of direction and purpose. So realistic and achievable goals are beneficial and inspirational. They have a positive and anabolic effect on us which brings out the best and enables us to perform to our highest potential.

6.3 GOAL SETTING IS ESSENTIAL TO GOOD PERFORMANCE.

In whatever areas of life we consider, whether business, sporting activities, achievements of every kind, wherever good performance is required, it is essential to set your goals and dedicate yourself to their fulfillment. Everyone needs some goals in life, for without them life becomes without direction or purpose. We meander through life without direction or fulfillment if we do not define and set our goals and then make realistic plans to fulfill them.

6.4 GOAL SETTING CAN BE GOD GLORIFYING.

As Paul neared the end of his life he rejoiced that he was prepared to meet his Lord. He had "fought a good fight, finished the race, kept the faith." This kind of fulfillment could only be possible for one who had set himself those goals and striven towards them with dedicated purpose. If we do not set ourselves a similar goal now, we may never be able to share that kind of rejoicing with Paul

6.5 LITTLE IS ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT GOAL SETTING.

This is true in any sphere of life and it is true in respect of spiritual achievements. If you do not set a goal before your church little progress or growth will be experienced. The secret is to set the goals in cooperation with the Lord. Let His goals become your goals. Unless you set some goals your vision will always lack shape and dimension. It will be abstract and nebulous and you will never know whether or not you have accomplished your purpose.

7: BE PREPARED FOR CHANGES.

One of the most difficult things for many churches to cope with is change. A favourite phrase seems to be, "we don't do things that way in this church." Well the fact that must be faced is that doing things the way you have always done them has possibly not produced any great measure of growth, and if you continue to do things that way you can only expect more of the same. If things are going to improve, grow, and develop, **there will have to be some radical changes.** So everyone involved, from the leadership to the membership, will have to accept some changes. Initially this may not be easy.

Some people are more entrenched in their traditions and ways than you or they ever realised. Some may resent the changes to the degree that they leave your church. Sad as it is to lose members it is often inevitable and frequently necessary for such people to go. It is often their subtle influences which have unobtrusively stifled growth and until those influences are either forsaken or taken away, the changes which will bring new life and growth cannot happen. Others may stay and resist the changes and such resistance will have to be recognised and dealt with because unity of purpose is essential to the successful implementation of a strategy which will cause effective growth.

Chapter Seven

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF CHURCH GROWTH

Some aspects and ingredients of a successful Church Growth program may vary from place to place depending on unique local circumstances. But there are other aspects, most of them biblically authenticated, which seem to be common and integral to effective church growth wherever it occurs. Let us look briefly at some of these factors.

1: DEDICATED AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP.

Firstly please note that a leader may be genuinely dedicated without necessarily being effective. (i.e. producing the intended result.) Such leaders may be dedicated, devoted, sincere, hard working, yet not effective. They do not get the job done!

Effectiveness basically means, - "efficient at getting the job done." No matter what areas he may excel in, if the real task is not accomplished successfully, then the leader is NOT effective. What are some of those things which make a leader effective?

1.1: HE MUST KNOW WHERE HE IS GOING.

The effective leader is primarily a visionary. He sees into the future, discerns what God wants to accomplish, and dedicates himself to being part of its fulfillment.

1.2: HE CAN PERSUADE PEOPLE TO BE PART OF THE VISION.

Probably the main indication of a good leader is that *people follow him*. If nobody is following you, then you are **NOT** an effective leader.

1.3: HE CAN COMMUNICATE THE VISION CLEARLY.

The effective leader is not a visionary in the sense that his objectives are vague and ethereal. He is able to define and detail the vision and communicate it powerfully in an easily understandable form. He is able to impart the vision to others so that they become part of it.

1.4: HE IS A CHALLENGING MOTIVATOR.

Not only does he discern and define the direction of the church, he is able to powerfully motivate the members to become a dedicated part of the fulfillment of its vision for growth and reproduction.

1.5: HE IS AN INSPIRING ROLE MODEL.

An effective leader, leads his people by going ahead of them and thus showing the way and modeling how to proceed.

1.6: HE IS A PERSON OF FAITH.

Fulfilling God's purpose is impossible without faith. (Heb. 11 :6.) To borrow a phrase from Dr. Robert Schuller, the leader must be a "Possibility Thinker." He must think and talk creative faith thoughts. But more than this he must also be able to "put legs on those ideas" and make them work by faith.

1.7: HE HAS CONSISTENT CHARACTER CREDIBILITY.

Every Church seems to possess its own character and personality. Ideally this should mirror the character of God. But it also reflects the character of the leadership too. Someone has said that "God cannot build His Church any bigger than He can build its leaders." The principle which God has built into nature of every seed producing after its own kind remains true in churches too. What a grave responsibility and a tremendous challenge to church leaders!

2: A DEDICATED, ACTIVE, AND ORGANISED MEMBERSHIP.

The main task of a pastor is to train and prepare his members to "do the work of the ministry." Eph. 4 :11, 12. Therefore the members are, to a large degree, what he has made or not made them. There are certain characteristics desirable in Church members of which we should always be conscious and which we should seek with all our abilities to inculcate.

2.1. A PEOPLE WHO "KNOW THEIR GOD."

"The people that know their God, shall be strong and do exploits." Dan. 11 :32.

Christianity is not a message, a philosophy or a theology, it is a Person. Paul's overwhelming ambition was to know that Person, *"in the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings and conformity to His death."* Phil. 3:10. Our task, our redemptive purpose, is to introduce people to that Person. In order to do this we ourselves must truly know Him. The better we know Him, the more effective we will be for Him.

2.2. A PEOPLE OF PRAYER.

Prayer is essentially communion with God. Spending time with Him, getting to know Him better, and being changed into His likeness. The intimacy of prayer is the atmosphere in which God shapes and moulds His people, preparing them for every good work.

2.3. A PEOPLE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.

This dynamic experience has been described in various terms and a great deal of controversy has developed over various interpretations. Whatever our particular view or conviction may be, God has commanded each one of us to be "filled with the Spirit", and irrespective of what our theology or definition

may be we are under orders to be filled with God's Spirit. We need the power, authority and ability which only He can give.

2.4. COMMITTED TO KINGDOM GROWTH.

Although our subject is Church Growth our mentality and vision should be Kingdom Growth, for this is the wider view and the one which God delights to honour. If we "tunnel vision", and are only concerned with the growth of "our church", we may well be imprisoned by a selfish view which God cannot really bless. We must rise above the "my church, or my denomination" view, and see the greater picture of God's Kingdom. This is a much healthier and more fruitful concept.

2.5. OPEN TO NECESSARY CHANGES.

One of the most prevalent obstacles to growth is an unwillingness to see the status quo changed. Religious tradition clings to the past and to what has always been. But growth will demand change and unless we are willing to accommodate it we shall never experience growth. For many this requires a real deliverance from religious tradition.

2.6. ACTIVATED AND ORGANISED.

The picture of the early church is of a divinely activated Body, organised for efficiency and effectiveness and this formula works today too. Show me a church where the members have been inspired, challenged and activated, and those members have been trained and organised into effective service, and I will show you a church which cannot help but grow. Body evangelism is the surest way to growth and development.

2.7. UNITED AND LOYAL.

David says, ***"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for God's people to dwell in unity,..... for THERE the Lord has commanded His Blessing."*** Psa.133.

Genesis. 11 :6. reminds us that when a people are united in their purpose, nothing which they conceive will be withheld from them. If this is true of the unGodly, how much more it is true of God's people? A true unity makes God's people invincible. In order to achieve such a unity there is an essential requirement for loyalty, without which unity can never be maintained. This includes loyalty to God, His Church, the leadership and program of the church.

3: A PROGRAM WHICH SERVICES THE NEEDS OF THE CONGREGATION.

3.1. Everyone has certain basic areas in their lives which need to be ministered to. These needs relate to their personal, domestic, family, and business life. Pastors should always remember that their members live out there in a hostile environment with very real problems which confront and challenge them every day. They need encouragement, direction, real fellowship, and practical teaching which will help them maintain victory and fulfillment in their every-day lives. In order to fill these real needs the church must minister at three basic levels :-

a: CELEBRATION. When the whole fellowship meets corporately to rejoice and worship God together.

b: CONGREGATION. This includes the congregating of special interest groups. e.g youth, young couples, senior citizens, music teams, solo parents, children's church, new converts class, etc. (some of these groups may number 40, or 50 persons.)

c: CELL GROUPS. (sometimes called Home Care Fellowship.) Small, committed groups of caring people, ministering to each other and reaching into their community.

Let's take a closer look at each of these.

3.2. CELEBRATION.

This is the large, public gathering of the whole local fellowship to worship God together, to hear God's Word expounded, and to preach the Gospel to any pre-Christians who may be present. This usually occurs once or twice weekly. e.g. Sunday morning and evening. Notice the emphasis on **CELEBRATION**. Most churches need to learn how to celebrate. Many Church gatherings are like funerals instead of weddings. We need to remember that God commanded His people to rejoice as they kept the great Feasts together. God's people need opportunity to express their joyful praises with other like minded people. Music should be expressive and joyful. Everyone needs to experience times of joy and rejoicing. It edifies and strengthens the life. One of the most attractive features of a growing church is usually the music, singing, praise and worship and joyful atmosphere. Obviously this can be tailored to some degree to suit the particular type of people who constitute the fellowship, but the main ingredients of praise, worship, joyful expression, and emotional release should be common to every fellowship gathering. I have a simple saying, which I believe every pastor needs to believe. "It's O.K. to be happy!!!" Preach and practice it.

3.3 This is also an good time for RELEVANT AND DYNAMIC PREACHING.

The dynamic preaching of Jesus attracted multitudes of people wherever He went. The average persons were enthralled by His teaching. Our preaching too can be an attractive and compelling feature of our celebrations. Preaching

should never be boring. Some motivators recommend the "AIDA" principle for effective communication :-

- A** Attention getting. - Grab the people's interest, and hold it throughout.
- I** Informative. - Give your listeners something of substance.
- D** Decision oriented. Preach for decisive results.
- A** Action. Follow through to inspire positive action.

Pastor, major on developing your preaching and platform skills and abilities.
"It pleased God, through the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believed." 1 Cor. 1 :21.

- PREACH JESUS.
- PREACH THE BIBLE.
- PREACH WITH THE ANOINTING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- PREACH TO HEAL PEOPLE'S HURTS.
- BE REAL, NOT RELIGIOUS.
- BE INTERESTING AND HELPFUL.
- BE PRACTICAL.
- PREACH FOR RESULTS.

3.4. CONGREGATIONAL PARTICIPATION.

Your congregation needs to sense and feel that they are actually an integral part of the celebration and not merely spectators or listeners. This can be accomplished initially through praise and worship into which the people are willingly drawn. Being one with a worshipping body of people is an inspiring and edifying experience that is extremely therapeutic and rewarding.

You can also make your congregation part of the experience by relating to them realistically. Establish a spiritual rapport or relationship with the people. Never see the congregation as an audience who are there to witness your "performance". Rather see yourself as a "High priest" whose privilege it is to lead the people into the throne room of God.

Have the people join together in prayer with you for the various needs that are represented. Some churches effectively encourage the people to form "prayer circles" at some time during the service. Each circle is then encouraged to pray for specific needs within that circle.

3.5. OPPORTUNITY FOR MINISTRY AND PRAYER.

In every service there are people who are hurting and need encouragement and prayer. It is not sufficient to preach to them, you must also give them opportunity to receive personal ministry and prayer. This can often be accomplished most readily by calling the people forward at the close of the service in an "altar call." You should also invite people to wait behind

afterwards and make help available to them through yourself, or one of your appointed counselors.

4: CONGREGATION.

This involves the formation of special interest groups in which people can meet. It enables the church to minister more specifically than in the general atmosphere of the celebration. Some churches choose to have an evening when all these electives are available in the church facility. For example, the whole family may go to church together but when they arrive Dad goes to Men's Fellowship, Mum to the Women's Fellowship, teens to the Youth, or Choir, or Music group practice.

This style of gathering helps people to congregate with their peers with whom they share special common interests. It also enables various departments e.g. Music group, Choir, Drama group, Soul Winner's Fellowship, to develop their various ministries.

Each "congregation" functions under competent appointed leadership which is answerable to, and under the covering of some member of the Pastoral Team.

5: CELL GROUPS.

This ministry appears under a variety of names and varies slightly in its style and function from church to church. But the basic idea is that of small groups which meet regularly for fellowship, instruction, activities and evangelism. The fact is that there are certain ministries which Jesus told us to perform for one another which cannot occur effectively in the large, impersonal setting of celebration, or congregation. They require the smaller, less formal, more intimate environment of a small group.

There are probably two major ways in which cell groups operate in church life.

1: The church which meets primarily in celebration and congregation, but also has cell groups.

2: The church which functions in cell groups but also meets from time to time in celebration and congregation.

I believe that both models are legitimate, but of the two the second model is probably more biblical. (closer to the New Testament model) and I believe that it is also the model of the future. Around the world, sometimes by choice, and sometimes by pressure, this model is emerging as the pattern of the future church.

Both models have merit and a great deal in common. Both of them :-

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- Meet in small groups, say 8 -15 persons.
- Usually meet in a private home.
- Are informal in character.
- Meet for mutual edification.
- Endeavour to meet felt needs of cell members.
- Are overseen by "lay leaders."
- Under the overall authority of the local church.

The first model is the better known and most widely practiced of the two, but I will concentrate my remaining remarks on the second, -the cell group church.

The cell group church is a net-work of reproducing cells which meet locally during the week for fellowship and activities, and gather together periodically for celebration and congregation.

Each cell is comprised of a small group of believers, usually between 8 -15. persons.

Each has a leader, and deputy leader.

Their agenda is usually comprised of 4 types of activity :-

a: LOVING.

The loving care and nurturing of each other. Here is an opportune venue for building relationships, between individuals, couples, families, relationships in which a family may "adopt" a single person. etc. The informal atmosphere of a cell group setting, enables people to relax and be themselves. They are better able to get to know other people in a more realistic manner than is possible in larger, formal gatherings.

Here a person can experience acceptance, interest, fellowship, and caring. The cell group gatherings should NOT take the form of another church service. The activities should be quite different. It should be far more informal and relaxed than are church services. Some of the legitimate activities include eating together, informal conversation, mutual sharing of experiences, problems, hopes and aspirations. Some of the evening's activities might include :-

Barbecues, "parties", games, testimonies, sing -songs, getting to know you nights. Other events could include weekends away together, special holiday outings, picnics and outdoor games.

b: LEARNING.

The Bible becomes the work book from which the ethics and principles of life are shared and learned together. The teaching mode should not be that of preaching or lecturing, but rather of mutual study and sharing. Everyone should have a chance to participate. Major emphasis should be given to

subjects which cover the every day issues and problems of life, including, marriage, family life, financial management, coping with stress, overcoming guilt and similar subjects. Opportunity must be made for questions, discussion, personal testimonies, and the like. The subjects should not be taught in an intellectual or academic manner only. Effort must be made to ensure that people truly understand and are able to practice the truths they have learned.

c: DECISION MAKING.

Although each cell has a designated leader, the whole group should share in determining what the program and activities of the group might consist of. Times of mutual sharing, planning and making decisions about activities and projects should be shared regularly. These decisions should not only cover the various programs for forthcoming meetings, they should also include planning of projects, mission trips etc. Here are some decisions which might be made :-

- Where to meet, how often, and when?
- The teaching emphasis for the next three months.
- What goals to set for the coming year.
- How to encourage the attendance of pre-Christians.
- How to best assimilate new members.
- What is the Holy Spirit saying to the group?
- What are we going to do about it?

d: ACTION TAKING.

Each cell should have some special tasks or missions which gives them a focus outside of themselves. It should also aim to undertake some practical projects in which all can participate, for the good of some member. Some of these activities might include :-

Services to the elderly.

Gardening, house painting, cleaning, washing, transport when needed. etc.

Services to single parents.

Baby sitting, hospitality, house repairs.

Ministry to children.

Run children's clubs, children's adventure club.

Ministry to Youth.

Friendship to lonely youths. Weekend camping expeditions, fishing etc.

Ministry in the Community.

Senior citizen's home visitation. hospital, or prison visitation.

Reach-out to your neighbourhood.

Barbecues, or family fun nights, video evenings etc.

World Mission project.

Tradesmen to work on a building project overseas.

Evangelism.

Sponsor various evangelistic outreaches and events.

SOME BENEFITS OF THIS STYLE OF STRUCTURE.

IT INVOLVES MORE LEADERS. (Shepherds.)

Spreads the work load of shepherding more evenly making more shepherding skills available.

PROVIDES MORE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW LEADERSHIP. On the job training is readily available to greater numbers.

BETTER ENVIRONMENT FOR LIFE TRANSFORMATION TO HAPPEN.

Discipleship and life transformation cannot happen too effectively in the celebration style environment. The inter-personal relationship style of cell groups is much more appropriate.

MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO CARE FOR THE MEMBERS.

More practical attention and care can be made available through this style.

CAN READILY MULTIPLY BY REPRODUCTION.

As potential leaders become experienced in this type of program the opportunities for forming more groups increases and leadership is already prepared and ready to assume leadership responsibilities.

PROVIDES EFFECTIVE BASES FOR EVANGELISM.

Cell group meetings provide excellent locations and environments for reaching into the surrounding community through evangelistic activities. They also provide an excellent venue for assimilating new believers.

CAN EASILY BE ADAPTED TO LOCAL CHURCH.

The cell group system can easily be adapted to the local church. Whatever particular style is adopted it is a relatively easy matter to adapt it to the local situation. (Model # 1. is somewhat easier to adapt than is #2.)

4: REACHING OUT INTO THE COMMUNITY.

No Church will see effective growth until it shifts its vision from internal to the external. Jesus said, *"Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest."* This is the very first step towards effective evangelism and church growth. Lifting up your gaze from the local, parochial matters, and allowing your attention to fix on the harvest fields around you.

No farmer will ever reap a harvest by staying home at the farm. He must shift his attention to the fields and then get out there and begin to prepare for a harvest. The eternal, never changing laws of the harvest decree that the seed

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must be sown, watered, fertilised, weeded and cared for before a harvest can ever be reaped. The church without a viable outreach into the local community is the church that will ultimately wither and die. But that church which lifts its vision, focuses its attention on the fields, and then gets out there prepared to work and labour will surely see a harvest. For *" Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy, and he who continually goes forth weeping bearing seed for sowing, shall undoubtedly come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."* (Psa. 126 : 5,6.)

5: CONSERVING THE HARVEST.

I have observed, and proven personally, that the real challenge is not only to bring people to a decision for Christ, but an even greater challenge is to establish and disciple those new believers. Many churches that have a dynamic evangelistic program do not grow at the rate they should because they do not sufficiently emphasise the need to conserve the results. The ministry of conservation is one of which it is almost impossible to exaggerate the importance. It is frequently perceived to be less glamorous than evangelism but is in fact more important. Unless the gains are conserved, all the previous effort has been wasted. So, the church which is committed to growth must treat this matter of conservation very seriously. Dedicated personnel must be thoroughly trained and prepared. Suitable literature must be obtained. New believers' classes should be held. Visitation must be undertaken. No effort should be spared, and every effort must be made, to ensure that the new believers are integrated into the Body and effectively disciplined.

Chapter Eight

THE MECHANICS OF CHURCH GROWTH

I am using the word "mechanics" in the sense of ***the principles, or functional aspects that make something work.***

1. SEE THE LONG TERM OBJECTIVE.

Sometimes we use the word "vision", but some understand a vision to be the biblical, supernatural type of vision, whereas what we are speaking about is the idea, concept, or picture of what God wants to accomplish in and through our church. We are endeavouring to see into the future and obtain an image of the long term purpose that God wants to accomplish.

This is something we want to ***see*** with the ***eyes of our spirit***. A picture we want God to burn into our heart and mind. Something which will be with us day and night, waking or sleeping. An ever present awareness of what God desires for the future life and ministry of our church. The more we think and pray about it the clearer this picture should become. It is the objective towards which our life and ministry is taking us.

To ensure that this objective is not a vague or hazy dream we need to wait on God in our spirit for a clearer, better defined understanding of the vision. We need to pray for more specific details of how this church will be. God will cause the vision to be multi-dimensional. We will see it, feel it, hear it. In our spirits we will be transported into it and get the prophetic sense and feel of it. It will become more real to us than is the present reality of what our church currently is.

Then we need to commit all this to writing. Patiently write down every detail you ***see*** in the vision which God is imparting to you. Make it as specific and realistic as possible.

2. DETERMINE THE ROUTE.

Determining the way or course to be taken to get us from one place to another. i.e. from where we are, to where God wants to take us. This is sometimes referred to as "establishing the goals or steps we must take to get to where we want to go."

Let me suggest a simple exercise to illustrate the basic idea of this. Supposing you heard about a Leadership Seminar to be held next year in the Full Gospel

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Church, Seoul, Korea. You know something of Dr. Cho's reputation as a church builder and you have a strong desire to attend this seminar.

THE OBJECTIVE is to attend that seminar.

THE ROUTE consists of the steps you must take to achieve that objective.

So, let's consider the steps you would need to take. Sit down and think about it. Write down systematically all the steps you must take.

Find out all about it.

WHEN will it be held?

WHERE will it be held?

WHO will the speakers be?

WHAT will their subjects be?

HOW MUCH will it cost to attend? Registration, - accommodation?

Send off your application. Make sure you are eligible and can gain acceptance.

Inquire about possible flights to Korea. Phone all the airlines. Ask about routes. Inquire about prices.

Passport. Do you have a valid one?

Visas. What type of visa will you need?

Can you get leave from your job or church?

Who may look after your church whilst you are absent?

Arrange for your family's welfare in your absence.

Put this into your diary and schedule for next year.

Book your air tickets.

Plan your departure.

This is a simple idea of the various steps you would need to take to fulfill the objective of attending a Seminar. Now, envisage where God wants your church to go, and plot the route of how you will get there.

3. SELECT AND PREPARE THE PERSONNEL.

Choosing the right people to help you fulfill the vision is absolutely vital. It is good to build your team as early as possible though restricted finances in the earlier stages may make this difficult. Look for these qualities :-

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A: QUALIFIED AND CAPABLE.

If the person is not already trained and qualified, make sure they have the potential to accomplish the work for which they are chosen.

B: WILLING TO WORK.

Not everyone who is qualified will actually work hard. Make sure that your co-workers are willing to work hard to fulfill the vision.

C: TEACHABLE SPIRIT.

Humility and a teachable spirit are essentials.

D: COMPATIBLE.

Able and willing to get along well with others as a team.

E: LOYALTY.

Your ministry team set the example for the whole church and it is essential that they are seen to be loyal to your leadership, the team, the program and the church.

Here are some further considerations :-

Always staff to complement your ministry, not to compete with it.

Choose some persons who will do the things which are not your greatest strengths.

Aim to have a balanced staff to cover a wide range of duties.

Administrative gifts are equally important.

4. DELEGATE THE RESPONSIBILITIES.

Delegation includes :-

DEFINING THE TASKS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED.

DESCRIBING THOSE TASKS. (Ideally on paper.)

DELEGATING THE TASKS. (Entrusting them to another.)

N.B. The Responsibility should be assigned, and then the authority.

Always look for those who are seeking responsibility, not authority!

5. OVERSEE THE PROGRESS.

Once the program of Church Growth is launched it must be monitored frequently, regularly, and consistently. The best way to do this is by holding regular staff meeting at which all members must be present and present a report of their departments. A good time to do this is often on Tuesday morning. The weekend can then be constructively reviewed, observations can be made, various reports given, and the future prayerfully discussed. In this way the whole team can keep abreast of current developments.

6. RECTIFY AND ADJUST THE PROGRAM.

Some problems do not manifest themselves until the program is under way. However they should be recognised as early as possible and immediate steps

taken to solve problems and make necessary adjustments to any aspect of the program which is not working well.

If there are problems with individual team members these should not be dealt with in the Staff meetings. Appointments must be made privately with such members so that their performance can be discussed confidentially between you and them.

7. REJOICE AND RE-DEDICATE.

As evidences of growth and development are observed let the whole team rejoice together in the victories which God is giving. Avoid any tendency towards complacency or a feeling that "we have made it!" Keep the sharp edge of your ministries well honed. As you celebrate achievements, remember also to have frequent times of re-dedication when the whole team acknowledges its total dependence on God and makes a fresh commitment to love and serve Him in His Body.

Chapter Nine

SMALL CAN BE BEAUTIFUL TOO

With all our emphasis on Church Growth and its relevant statistics, it might be easy to gain the impression that only big is beautiful and this is certainly not the case. Obviously larger churches claim our attention and sometimes become the criteria towards which we aim in projecting the concept of Church Growth. We may even feel guilty that our church is so much smaller, but actually large churches are the exception rather than the rule. A reliable source has furnished the following figures concerning the average size of churches world wide :-

Only 5 % of churches have more than 350 members.
95 % of churches have less than 350 members.
50 % of churches have less than 75 members.

So if you have 76 members you are slightly above the world wide average

BABIES ARE BEAUTIFUL.

Everyone loves a little baby, - their attractiveness is universal. Little babies are really cute, but if they do not develop in a manner commensurate with their age there is real cause for concern. Growth and development are indications of normal health and well being. If normal development is not evident at the appropriate time, investigation should be made into the reasons. There are several circumstances in which Small is normal and legitimate :-

a: In an infant church during its early stages.

Every baby is small at birth. This is normal, acceptable, and understood. However, as the weeks and months go by there are usually many exciting indications of growth and development and it is precisely these signs that thrill the parents. If they are not evident there is cause for concern, and the longer this persists the greater the concern.

b: In villages or small communities.

It is obvious that a church in a village is probably not going to become a mega-church, particularly if that village is somewhat isolated and without transport facilities from surrounding areas. If the size of this church is compared with the population of the area, the percentage of the population attending even an apparently small church may be quite impressive.

c: In hostile environments.

Obviously there are some places where Church Growth is much harder to obtain due to the resistance and hostility of the local population. This may stem from political or religious prejudice. In such places even one convert won is almost priceless and even the smallest % growth rate is great cause for rejoicing and thanksgiving. I feel certain that the "Lord of the Harvest" takes great delight in seeing one soul won in this context.

d: In reproducing churches.

Where a church has chosen to reproduce itself and its membership is found in several smaller congregations rather than one large one.

However, there are some other exceptions to these observations, and circumstances in which a smaller congregation may be healthy and normal and perfectly biblical and legitimate.

GOD IS A GOD OF VARIETY.

The universe and all of nature reveal God's love of variety. Jesus spoke of His Father's love for the tiniest sparrow and in doing so reveals His love for those things which are small and sometimes despised by man. In the bold emphasis of Church Growth it is too easy to assume that there is necessarily something abnormal and tragic about a small church. I am sure that there are millions of "small churches" in which God takes great delight. Their numerical size may not be impressive, but their spiritual development may nevertheless be well pleasing to God. I am sure that there are some legitimate and acceptable reasons why some healthy churches have not experienced dramatic growth. (But I also believe that many such churches can experience greater growth through making some minor adjustments.)

NOT ALL MINISTRIES ARE THE SAME.

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are various kinds of operations, but it is the same God that works in them all." (1 Cor. 12 : 4-6.)

Since God has given various, different types of ministry gifts it is reasonable to assume that the operations and functions of these diverse giftings will produce a variety of results. Therefore let us not expect that every church will be alike, or the results and accomplishments the same. Nor lest us presume that one "result" is greater or better than another.

NOT ALL PEOPLE ARE THE SAME.

God has created an enormous variety in the human race. In all the world's vast population, no two people are exactly the same. This is not only true of their appearance but also of their character, nature, personality, and disposition.

It is also true of their needs and aspirations. In order to meet this variety of human needs it seems feasible that a variety of ministries and various kinds of churches will be required.

NOT ALL CHURCHES ARE THE SAME.

This is obvious from reading the Epistles in the New Testament. The approach may be similar but the heart of the message differs in each case. Because the nature, and constituency of each church is different. The Epistles are applicable to all, but some of those letters were even more applicable to certain of the churches. The same principles holds true today and the fact is that the specific needs of some people are more appropriately and effectively met in the environment of a smaller church. There are particular features of a smaller church community which are more appropriate and conducive to meeting certain needs.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT CAN TAKE DIFFERENT FORMS.

Because a particular church does not have huge numbers of people attending, it does not necessarily mean that this church is sick or deformed. Its growth and vitality can be manifest in more ways than one. I have been privileged to visit and minister in numerous congregations which were not large numerically yet were making a vital contribution to their community and meeting many real needs.

**SOME FEATURES AND ADVANTAGES OF A SMALLER CHURCH.
PERSONAL RATHER THAN IMPERSONAL.**

In the larger church it is not always easy to maintain the personal touch. Sometimes the sheer weight of numbers attending a church can make the atmosphere somewhat impersonal. Certain types of people find this less than satisfying. Their particular nature needs the assurance and security of a closer knit group

A FAMILY ATMOSPHERE.

Some smaller fellowships, particularly where the pastor has a "father heart" for his people, develop a sense of *family* amongst the members which is not always easy to duplicate in the context of a large church.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT.

It is sometimes felt that a smaller church needs voluntary helpers more than a large church does. Particularly a certain type of person who seems to function better in a smaller crowd. Some people find great fulfillment assisting in such situations, and certain people flourish in the situations which require this kind of assistance.

Some smaller churches find the fulfillment of their tasks more difficult because of

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- Limited available personnel.
- Limited financial resources.
- Limited facilities.

As we look at some of these reasons, and examine the situation of our own church family, we need to make sure that they are **reasons**, and not **excuses**.

BASIC PRINCIPLES REMAIN CONSTANT.

Irrespective of the size of a church, some basic principles for the effective functioning of that church remain the same. To enjoy spiritual health and to fulfill the purpose and calling of God, every church needs :-

- a: Effective leadership.
- b: Edification of the Body.
- c: Evangelistic activities.

Every church needs a vision, a purpose for being, a clear sense of direction, and some criteria in order to know that the purpose is being fulfilled. That vision needs to be specific with defined goals and objectives. The church needs to know where it is heading and whether it is making progress towards its goal.

SOME VITAL INGREDIENTS TO MAKE SMALL CHURCHES GROW.

a: LIFE.

Jesus said, *"I am come that you might have LIFE, and that you might have it more abundantly."* (John. 10 :10.), but to look at some churches you would never realise it. Everything is neat and orderly, but it is as dead as the local cemetery.

The life of God is a most dynamic, powerful, and invigorating element. It is positively addictive. Once you have experienced it you cannot live without it. Once people feel and recognise it they will want to possess it in its fullness. Every church should determine, through prayer, faith, praise, and rejoicing, to experience the manifest presence of God and His life.

b: TRUTH.

Jesus said, *"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*
Jn. 8 :32.

God's Truth is not a static, formal, lifeless commodity. It is vibrant, thrilling, and exciting. It is LIVING TRUTH, and Jesus is the embodiment of Truth. So when God's truth is a present reality in a church it does not introduce formalism, ritual and deadness. The opposite is true. His Truth is the most liberating, releasing, force in the world. Don't stifle that life. Don't bury it under loads of religious ceremony and ritual. Don't diminish it with

conservatism. Let the living truth of God prevail and let His earthly church be radiant with it.

c: PURPOSE.

Too many people have decided that the church is irrelevant and purposeless. This is their persuasion after some cursory contact with it. The fact is that God's redemptive purposes, currently being worked out in His church, but soon to be manifest in the earth for all to see, is the most relevant and meaningful purpose on earth. Every church needs to thoroughly awaken to God's redemptive purpose and begin to pursue it with all their being. Once a church becomes vitally involved in the working through and fulfillment of God's Highest purpose, it is a cause which is irresistible.

d: ACTIVITY.

I am not referring to the activity of programs, and the endless activities of "playing church", but to the activities of God's life amongst His people. The dynamic activities of the Holy Spirit.

These activities can only be experienced when we allow the Holy Spirit to truly be in charge of His Church. They will bring healing, deliverance, release to the captives, and joy unspeakable and full of glory. Wherever there is healthy life, there is ACTIVITY.

d: FRIENDLINESS.

One of the features in which smaller churches can excel is that of friendliness. It is possible in a smallish group to foster a real sense of belonging. However this does not happen automatically simply because the group is small. It has to be fostered and sustained, because it is also true that small groups can easily become introvert and cliquish. This danger must be avoided at all cost.

e: HOPE.

Hope is positive and optimistic expectation and this is something for which so many millions in our world are eagerly longing. The Kingdom of God is the only message which can offer this kind of hope. The Kingdom is both present, and yet to be revealed. Present in the Kingdom realities which are potentially available in the church today. The righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (Rom. 14 :17.) Future, in that God's glorious earthly rule is soon to be established and *"the kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Messiah, and He shall reign forever and forever."* (Rev. 11 :15.)

f: ATMOSPHERE.

Atmosphere is a very important and critical aspect of an effective church. Yet it is extremely difficult to define or describe. I think if there is one thing which impresses new-comers above all else, it is the atmosphere which is experienced in the presence of God and His people. Even when we consider

all the various elements that may constitute this special atmosphere, we still cannot fully explain what it is that impresses people so powerfully and so profoundly. There are undoubtedly numerous definable factors such as music, freedom, joy, praise and worship, yet beyond all this there is also something mystical, and it is the indefinable presence of God by the Holy Spirit. This atmosphere is something we should highly esteem and covet. It is a priceless thing of inestimable value.

CONCLUSION.

Having shared these comments about churches which may not, for some legitimate reasons, be experiencing healthy growth, let me conclude by emphasising that these cases should be the exception and not the rule.

The general principle is that whatever has life is meant to develop and grow. But this will not happen if the living entity is not healthy. In the case of a church it will not happen unless that church anticipates and reaches for that growth.

Development, growth, and expansion should be welcomed and sought after features of every church. However, unless the leadership encourages faith and expectancy for it, then it will not happen. Allow me to conclude by sharing a brief, effective strategy for Growth.

1. DREAM GOD'S DREAM. Joel 2:28b

What is God's dream, His highest purpose for your church in these harvest days?

2. PLAN YOUR WORK

How will you achieve God's dream for your church?

3. WORK YOUR PLAN

No plan will ever be accomplished without work. Not the work of frenzied activities or programs but the productivity of people who are "laborers together with God" in the fulfillment of His plan and purpose.

4. RE-FOCUS

Every vision needs to be kept in focus. Circumstances and situations often change requiring us to focus afresh on our task. We need to periodically re-focus the vision and re-commit to the task. We frequently need to adjust our strategy, making necessary changes.

5. PERSIST

Real faith does not always accomplish its purpose immediately. It has factors of persistence and patience that keep going even in the face of delay, disappointment, and seeming impossibilities.

Conclusion:

Gal 6:9

9 *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time **we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.***

(NIV)

Chapter Ten

LET'S SUMMARISE

In this final chapter I shall try to summarise the case for Church Growth, reiterating many of those things we have already shared, and introducing some final thoughts on this important subject.

1. GROWTH IS A NATURAL PROCESS OF LIFE.

Every living thing that God has created has the process of growth and development inherent within it. This is a fundamental fact of nature and a principle which is evident in all creation.

The exceptions to this rule are usually the result of genetic deformities and are considered abnormal. Other reasons may be the presence of some disease which inhibits development and healthy growth.

The Church of Jesus Christ is essentially and primarily, a living organism and as such is no exception to these divinely ordained principles. It has inbuilt features which if properly cared for will produce healthy growth. This is true, even under the most difficult circumstances. However, the Church must be free from genetic deformities and inherited diseases.

Genetic deformities usually occur during the pre-natal, or birthing process. They are aberrations introduced into the church during the process of birthing. They may be in the form of wrong doctrine, carnal behaviour, or unscriptural foundations, and they inhibit growth because God's blessing will not be bestowed on such a church.

Inherited diseases are usually manifest in sinful situations which are allowed to go unchecked. Fortunately there are biblical remedies of confession, repentance, restitution, and restoration. When such remedies are faithfully applied the result will usually be spiritual renewal and revival.

Healthy growth is always multi-directional and balanced. Achieving that balance is frequently the key to healthy and sustained growth.

The Church is primarily a spiritual organism, but it is also a human organisation. It is a combination of the divine and the human. The spiritual, and the natural, and it is this delicate balance which needs to be kept in tension. Some of the aspects of development, in their order of priority, which need to be held in balance to ensure sustained growth are :-

- a: Spiritual life.**
- b: Numerical increase.**
- c: Organisational skills and efficiency.**

These are the three main aspects of church life, development, and increase and none of them can be ignored or neglected. In fact, for sustained and healthy growth, each factor must be developed at a commensurate rate.

2. SOME BASIC, INDISPENSABLE REALITIES.

There are several realities which must be faced and accepted if any church is to experience a time of sustained growth.

a: The church must want to grow. This is more than a willingness to grow, it is a **Will to grow**. A desire and a commitment to see growth happen.

b: The church must be willing to pay the price of growth. Let's face it right here, there certainly is a price to be paid and sometimes it is quite high. The price must be made in effort, man hours, money, sacrifices. Jesus reminds us that it is the **labourers** who bring in the harvest. There will be inconveniences, disappointments, and set backs. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy will come in the morning.

c: The church will need to observe certain principles. No two churches are the same. Every congregation has a character of its own. But there are certain principles of harvest and increase which have to be observed if increase is to be experienced. Every harvest is preceded by ploughing, sowing, watering and sunshine. The principles are unchanging and unavoidable. They must be observed.

3. MAKE AN HONEST ASSESSMENT.

"Honesty is the best policy", is a well known maxim, but in terms of initiating Church Growth, it is the ONLY policy.

Until we honestly admit our true situation, we will never seriously seek a remedy.

There are reliable methods of determining the health of a church and we must be brave and honest enough to apply them.

We must honestly examine and assess the situation in the three vital areas :-

a: Spiritual Life and witness.

What is the quality of spiritual life in our fellowship?

(Express it on a scale of 1 -10, between dead, and dynamic.)

How effective is our impact on the local community?

(Express it on a scale of 1 -10, between non-existent, and powerful.)

It is relatively easy to assess the health of any church. Simply ask a couple of questions next Sunday.

1: How many are actively involved in the work of the church?

More than 50%, = Healthy.

Less than 30%, = Sick.

Less than 20%, = Dead.

2: How many were Born Again this year?

More than 10%, = Healthy.

Less than 5%, = Sick.

None, = Dead

b: Numerical increase.

Numerical increases is NOT the only indicator of spiritual health, but it is an important one. The following chart has been compiled by a church growth analyst. It is based on decadal rate. (10 year period.)

25%, = Poor.

50%, = Fair.

100%, = Good.

200%, = Excellent.

300%, = Marvellous.

c: Organisational effectiveness.

The early church moved into top gear when the Apostles got on top of their administration problems, expanded their ministry team, prioritised their tasks, and delegated some of the administrative ones.

Obviously the spiritual aspects of Church Growth are the most important but good organisation and administration are also extremely important. The larger the church grows, the more important these issues become.

4. WHAT IS OUR REAL PURPOSE?

The real health of a church can only be deduced in relation to the fulfillment, or otherwise, of its true purpose. Is really fulfilling its real mission, and how effectively?

So we need to ask ourselves afresh :-

What is the church really here to accomplish in the world?

What is our church specifically meant to accomplish?

Are we on target?

Are we truly fulfilling our mission and purpose to God's satisfaction?

The primary purpose of the church of Jesus Christ is to :-

- **Proclaim the Gospel of salvation through Christ.**
- **Win people to Christ.**
- **Integrate them into His Body.**
- **Disciple them.**
- **Activate them. (to win others.)**
- **Prepare them for the Kingdom rule of Jesus.**

We need to be brutally honest in our assessment. If we find ourselves wanting, we must heed the words of Jesus, ***"Remember from where you have fallen, and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent."*** Rev. 2:5.

5. ESTABLISHING RIGHT PRIORITIES.

To prioritise, is to recognise those things which are most important and give them first consideration. One of the tragedies of many churches is that they major in things of minor importance, and minor in things of major import. Consequently there is lots of activity and expenditure of time, effort and finance on things that are inconsequential, whilst those things of real importance are frequently neglected.

What is our real "reason for being?" Are we accomplishing the God-given objectives of the church?

These are the basics, the foundations, the first works. Let us make sure we are doing them or else repent. (Rev. 2 :5.)

6. STRATEGISING FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT.

We have seen that strategising is simply "Making responsible plans for the future." Without such deliberations and plans we will never accomplish our real purpose, so let's do it.

Effective Strategy must include :-

- a: Clarity of purpose. (What do we really want to accomplish?)
- b: Deep desire. (Are our hearts really in this?)
- c: Ability to recognise future realities and requirements.
- e: Examine all the aspects.
- f: Predict the solutions. (long term, and short term)
- g: Include all requirements. (personnel, equipment, budget.)
- h: Put it all together. (a complete package.)

7. THE RIGHT KIND OF PROGRAMS.

Strategising is looking ahead, then thinking and planning in the light of that forward look. Programming, is putting the strategy to work. Every strategy has to become a program. Every idea has to be given legs.

The program is how the ideas and plans are actually worked out in reality.

8. THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP.

Leadership is the ultimate key to effectiveness. It has the ultimate power to lead forward into success and fulfillment, or hold back and stifle any progress.

Choosing and appointing the right leaders is of critical importance.

9. MAKING DISCIPLES.

The difference between stagnation and growth, is the difference between members and disciples.

The discipling of the believers is of supreme importance. It should take precedence over most other responsibilities.

An essential and indispensable part of the Great Commission is to "*make disciples of all nations.*" (Matt. 28 : 19, 20.)

10. EQUIPPING THE SAINTS.

This is the primary task of all the Apostolic ministries, (Eph. 4 ;11, 12.) to train, equip and prepare all the saints, enabling them to minister to the Body, the Church. The minister must never try to do all the ministry himself. He must make it his priority to train others to do it with him.

11. THE IMPORTANCE OF CELL GROUPS.

The cell group structure and its implications, have been part of the Body of Christ since its very inception. There are many aspects of our ministries one to another which cannot be performed except in the context of small group situations. This environment is as important to the Church today as ever it was. Its importance will be even greater in the future as the events which transpire in the world make it imperative for Christians to relate in the context of small groups of caring believers.

12. EVANGELISM, THE ULTIMATE KEY.

Evangelism, telling forth the Good News of Jesus, must always remain our number one priority. It must pervade the atmosphere in every area of the church. It must be the ultimate objective in all our plans and programs. The believers must live and breathe evangelism.

I believe that Gospel evangelism is the "key of the Kingdom" which Jesus gave to Peter. (Matt. 16:19) It's the key which opens the gates of God's Kingdom to the whosoever. Jesus said that "This Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in all the world, to every creature, before the return of the Lord. We are now living in that prophetic period when this task is to be fulfilled. We are the generation privileged to engage in this great ministry.

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