

PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

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Dedication

Teamwork is a marvelous thing. Properly implemented and used, it brings the talents and gifts of all of the team members into a harmonious effort toward a common goal. In the Kingdom of God, this kind of united workforce is of paramount importance. Writing a book entitled “Principles of Revival” only comes by being blessed through the years with the opportunity to be a part of such teams.

For six years prior to our departure to the Africa harvest field, I had the distinct privilege of working with and under the direction of Pastor Chester Wright, Bishop of Antioch The Apostolic Church in Annapolis, Maryland. His focused leadership gave me the opportunity to both follow and innovate. Anything that looked promising with regard to the overall goals of evangelism and edification of the Body of Christ was given a chance to prove efficacious. In other words, I could learn from the senior pastor as well as test my own newly developing ministerial skills (such as they were.) It was a wonderful time of exploration and discovery in Kingdom principles.

Arriving in Malawi in 1984 to begin our missionary ministry, my wife and I had the chance to use what we had learned in a field that was rapidly developing and in need of strong leadership. It was two years of learning while leading. Thank you, Rev. James Crumpacker, for the confidence you showed in allowing us to oversee the work in the great Malawian Church during your absence.

Then, arriving in Zambia in 1987, Patricia and I were joined to a new vision and a new responsibility. Our mission field superintendent, Rev. Melvin Thacker, continued to provide the kind of tolerant senior leadership style that cultivated a strong team effort in that part of Africa. Never doubting our motives, he consciously chose to emphasize working together, not caring about credit for accomplishment, but rather striving to produce a strong indigenous work for the Master. For this we will forever be grateful.

For us, twenty-one years after touching African soil for the first time, it is clear that this God-ordained program of developing teams for the harvest must now continue, finally culminating in a strong and spiritual band of Congolese brothers and sisters united in the effort to reach one of the greatest nations on the earth. That team is emerging.

To all of the men and women with whom we have shared the task of putting our hands to the plow and the sickle, this is book is humbly dedicated.

Thank you, Pastor David Huston of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, for your unceasing encouragement in writing, and for your continual labor of love in seeing it all come to the printed page.

Thanks to the Foreign Missions Division of the United Pentecostal Church International for allowing us to be part of it all.

Thanks, Pat, for always being there. Only Jesus knows your sacrifice.

PRINCIPLES OF REVIVAL

Introduction

“While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” --Genesis 8:22

“And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground: and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” --Mark 4:26-29

Two Sides Of Revival

One thing is certain: there is a harvest promised. As sure as the seasons that come and go each year, the harvest will always follow seedtime, both naturally and spiritually speaking. And, as Jesus put it in the passage from Mark 4, we do not have to understand all of the mechanisms of the harvest to know fully well that the harvest is a promised reality.

In the kingdom of God, seed planted in good ground produces fruit. That part represents the certainty of spiritual harvest. But there remain several variables in this biblical “equation.” The elements of the harvest actually consist of many parts. There is of course, the seed, which, according to Luke 8:11 is the Word of God. Then, someone must carry the seed to the place of its planting. After that, the sprouting and initial growth of the newly planted seed depends greatly on the type of soil in which it is embedded. Sunlight, rain, and nutrients proper for good growth must follow. Someone will be responsible for cultivating, weeding, and protecting the young seedlings. Sufficient time is necessary for growth, and finally, the harvester can put in the sickle and begin the reaping process. Even after the harvest, the process continues in a precise manner, separating the new fruit from the rest of the harvested material, and either preparing the fruit for consumption, or storing it properly for future planting, thereby starting the cycle all over again.

So we have at least the following components that are necessary for the process as a whole:

- The seed
- The sower
- The soil
- Sun, rain, and nutrients
- Care of the seedlings
- Timing
- Harvest

➤ Storage and re-sowing

This has been God’s way since the beginning, both with natural plants and with spiritual fruit and harvest. To violate any necessary part, or to be negligent in recognizing and adhering to this process risks failure in the all-important harvest.

Proverbs 20:4 provides an interesting perspective on why we might fail to enjoy such a promised harvest:

“The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.”

There are two dangers outlined in this profound verse. First of all, the subject of the warning is a “sluggard.” One who is slothful in his response to the Great Commission will of course never realize the harvest that God intends for his or her field. But the second reason is even more interesting. “By reason of the cold” represents a misunderstanding of the time to start the process of sowing. One who thinks the timing is not right, or as in this case, should come later on, will probably fail to participate with God in His plan and in His timing.

What we may consider as conditions that are not conducive to revival and harvest may actually be perfect according to God. So the two sides of revival can be seen: *the reality* in the Lord’s mind, and the importance of *our participation* with Him to see it accomplished. God’s part is certain—what about ours?

Revival And Harvest

One of the most used terms in the language of the Church is the word, “revival.” Certainly, there are two major definitions that can be applied to this simple, yet profound word. Firstly, we use it to describe the “rebirth” of something, or something that is being “revived” that was once dead or dying. Secondly, it is commonly used to quickly describe church growth, as in, “we are in revival,” or, “we are expecting to have a great revival.”

While it may seem that these two meanings attached to the word are in opposition or conflict, they actually are describing the same thing—a natural progression in the Kingdom of God—from becoming revived to a place of experiencing great growth. In fact, these describe the combined processes of revival and harvest. One surely leads to the other.

As we sincerely seek for spiritual revival in our churches and in our own spirits, we will be prepared for the process that starts with sowing and results with harvest. The “plowing” referred to in Proverbs 20:4 is part of the revival that is vitally necessary to our personal and corporate renewal. Allowing the Lord to dig deep and uproot what impedes our spiritual growth will help us be prepared for what surely lies ahead. Again, the harvest is promised, but our willingness to be involved is imperative.

Revival and harvest, therefore, while not exactly synonymous, remain closely tied together in the same effort toward the same goal. As we give ourselves to the revival, the harvest will follow. As we look at the six principles of revival contained in this study, I would suggest that the reader consider the meaning of revival in the sense of being committed once again to these principles. There will never be a suitable substitute for true harvest, and only a real spiritual revival coupled with a renewed dedication to sound Biblical principles will make us ready for that harvest.

Finally, the reader will notice that several subjects are excluded from the list of revival principles. Things like prayer, fasting, and preaching are not in the list. This is not at all to suggest they are less important than the others, but simply because they are so necessary that they appear to be unquestionable elements in any spiritual revival process. They should be part of everything that we do! I will assume in this study that the reader is already committed to these and other parts of a sure Christian foundation.

In other words, the six principles contained in this book are to be considered only after the fundamental tenets of our faith are well established. Others, also not in the list of six, can be added after the principles are adhered to. This is true especially concerning “auxiliary ministries” like music, men’s or women’s ministries, youth, etc. All of these serve well in their respective responsibilities as part of the sowing and reaping process. The key for church leadership, therefore, is in knowing the principles, and then knowing how to adapt and apply the various ministries available in relation to the needs present.

My hope is to explore in this book six principles necessary in growing a healthy church. In each chapter concerning these principles is a “checklist” that hopefully will be helpful in determining whether or not church leaders are adhering to the respective principles. Vision, Equipping the Saints, The Nucleus Concept, The Best Use of Gifts and Talents, A Balanced Ministry, and A Growing Organizational Structure serve as a progressive look at the steps necessary to providing the right spiritual environment in which true church growth and spiritual harvest can take place. May the reader be blessed in his or her search for such a harvest.

Ted Grosbach
Democratic Republic of Congo
2005

Chapter 1

LEAVES, BUT NO FRUIT

Hungry And Angry

What a shocking day it was! It was surely a day to remember. Jesus of Nazareth had come to Jerusalem, walked into the Temple, and had begun to chase out those that sold and bought sacrifices. He turned over the tables of the ones known as “moneychangers,” the ones who made quite a profit in changing filthy lucre into Jewish currency that was considered holy enough for worship. As he overturned the seats of those that sold doves for sacrificing, He cried out, “*Is it not written, “My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves.”*” Some were simply astonished at what He did. Others were very afraid. Still others plotted how to rid Jerusalem of this man from Galilee. In this story, however, lies a great and deep truth that can bless all of us, but it requires a careful look at the events preceding and following the scene at the Temple.

*“And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve. And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, **he was hungry**: and seeing a fig tree afar off **having leaves**, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found **nothing but leaves**; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, “No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever.” And the disciples heard it.” Mark 11:11-14*

Jesus had already been to the Temple the day before and had simply looked around. Verse 11 tells us that He looked upon all things before leaving. It was the same day in which He had entered Jerusalem riding upon the donkey with the multitudes shouting “Hosanna in the highest.” They had declared Him blessed in the name of the Lord, hoping that He was indeed the one to restore the kingdom of David in Israel. The very next day, however, found Him chasing out the corruption that had become so commonplace in what was once known as the House of God. Before entering into Jerusalem the second time though, Jesus stopped at a certain fig tree with a view of doing two things: to find fruit to eat as He was hungry; and to give an object lesson to the twelve that were with Him that day.

The Bible tells us that, even from a great distance away, Jesus saw that this tree had leaves. It was not quite the time of harvesting the figs, and therefore, there was a very good chance that the tree might be full of fruit, waiting for those passersby to help themselves as they traveled. But when arriving at the tree Jesus and the others found no fruit at all. Jesus’ reaction was the famous curse we now read about in Mark 11 and Matthew 21. Apparently, the disciples did not understand the lesson Jesus was teaching that day, for we read that the following day they were astonished to see the same tree now dried up and dead. We cannot afford to miss the essence of this same lesson, however.

Here was the Creator; the Word made flesh, the Almighty One who had come to find fruit on a tree that He had supplied throughout its life. He was the One that had given the sun and the rain, the nutrients and the care that was aimed at one single goal: producing edible fruit. On this day, though, when the Maker came for what was rightfully His, the tree had nothing to show except shiny leaves! From the spot of that curse, Jesus and the others traveled straight into Jerusalem and straight into the Temple to find a similar thing taking place, although not in a tree, but in men. Here was the House of the Lord, a place that was to shine forth the glory of God in worship and true holiness unto the God of Israel. It was ordained and consecrated as a house of worship, a place where men could give themselves as they offered their substitute sacrifices to God. Instead, it had become a place where only the outward motions of religious liturgy were being offered. If the Temple had been a tree, it would at this time have had only leaves, but no fruit!

Was it all just a coincidence then? When looking at the events of the following morning we can begin to clearly understand what all of this was really about. Once more, they passed the fig tree, now dead and already withered. Peter seemed surprised at this rapid change and remarked the same to the Lord. Jesus answered by saying, “*Have faith in God.*” Jesus went on to speak of the removal of the mountain (Jerusalem and the Temple) and the necessity to be fruitful in our own lives (desiring, praying, and receiving.) Even if the twelve failed the test that day, the message is clear for the Church of today: be fruitful and be careful.

God has abundantly blessed each of us, and there is a clear intent in these blessings: being fruitful. God gives every blessing, every provision, every day, and even every breath for a reason. To receive these things and misuse them is one of the greatest tragedies possible.

A short time after the Temple incident, Jesus teaches the parable of the man who took a far journey. In Mark 13:34-37 He says that the man “...*left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning. Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.*” The context is clear—the coming of the Lord. But the parable itself speaks of what those in the household were entrusted with. The man’s servants were given authority, every man was given his own work, and the porter was charged with the oversight thereof. They were, in other words, expected to accomplish something before the master of the house returned. The warning given by Jesus was clear enough: we must watch out so that we are not found asleep at the Master’s arrival. If sleeping, it would be proof that the objective was not being reached during the given time. The word for “watch” in verse 33 comes from the Greek, *agrupneo*, meaning “to chase away sleep, or to be sleepless.” At the close of the story another word for watch is used, *gregoreo*, meaning “to be vigilant, or spiritually awake.” It is not enough to simply keep the house intact, or to preserve the status quo; there was work assigned and authority given to carry out definite responsibilities. We cannot neglect these while choosing sleep instead. Referring back to the fig tree, we cannot permit the production of great looking leaves to substitute for the much sought after fruit!

The subject of this and the other chapters is revival and/or harvest. Whatever we might call the ingathering of souls into the Kingdom of God before His coming, the objective must be certain. We are ordained to be fruitful in this work, and nothing, not leaves, not outward adornment, nor substitute sacrifices will stand in place of what our great Master is seeking to have: spiritual fruit. In Mark 11, Israel had been targeted by the symbolism of the unfruitful fig tree. She had taken all that God had given, yet used it for the wrong reasons and toward the wrong end. Though much of Israel was no doubt religiously devoted, the nation had fallen into a lifeless and futile methodology, a mediocre form of godliness only. Corruption and hypocrisy had replaced genuine sacrifice and humility. The most respected of the religious crowd were termed as vipers by the Lord of heaven Himself. As horrible as it was, and as easy as it is to point the blame in all of this, it is also something that can all too easily ensnare us in today's Church. Though we might have great programs, polished oratory, expensive edifices, and even tremendous spiritual gifts of which Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians 12-14, if we have not love and if we are not fruitful in producing what the Lord is after, we may become nothing more than cursed and dying fig trees. The apostle Peter put it this way, *"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."* (1 Peter 4:10) Just like in the case of the fig tree, we are being given all that we need to become individually and corporately fruitful in the Kingdom of God. We must be very careful in ensuring that all of the sun and the rain and the nutrients are directed by the Spirit to achieve the desired goal.

The Enemy Of The Best

It is said that, "the good is often the enemy of the best." While this may be a mundane proverb, it may also, in fact, be scriptural. Joash, one of the kings of Israel, demonstrated this very attitude at a crucial time of his reign. While he may not be considered as one of the godliest men that ruled in Israel, he certainly showed his love, respect, and concern for the prophet Elisha when the latter was on his deathbed. As the great prophet neared death, the king came to express his despair at the coming loss to the nation that had so long been blessed by his ministry. Elisha was not quite finished in ministering, however. The prophet took the visit as an opportunity to comfort Joash and his nation concerning the ongoing persecution of Israel by Syria. God used Elisha prophetically in pronouncing deliverance to Israel from this oppression that they suffered. The way in which it was carried out, however, should be of interest to us.

Elisha first asked the king to shoot an arrow from the open window toward the east, and proclaimed it the "Lord's deliverance from Syria." Then, the prophet asked the king to do something very odd indeed. He said,

"Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." 2 Kings 13:18-19

Why Joash struck the ground with the arrows only three times we may never know. He may have felt embarrassed to do such a strange thing. Perhaps he felt it was something that was beneath his station as the ruler of a nation. Or, perhaps he felt that three was simply “enough.” In any case, it just wasn’t sufficient to please the man of God. There are several problems presented here:

- The future of Israel’s deliverance had been compromised.
- There was a certain intensity that was obviously lacking on the part of Joash.
- Elisha must have been troubled with the fact that, just before his death, it seemed there was no one to replace him that was quite as committed to the cause he held so dear. Who would care for this nation?
- Why not strike the ground until the prophet declared it was enough? After all, Elisha had started all of this; surely he would know how much was indeed enough!

One might wonder how this incident would be “reported” today. Would it be said in some glossy brochure that the man of God, working in conjunction with the king, had recently prophesied deliverance to Israel? Would it be shared around the world by e-mail that Joash had been “used by the Lord” in an answer to Israel’s need? Or would there be a realistic presentation of the truth: the king had settled for a little bit of obedience, when much more had been the intended will of God. It was actually a case of a little good in lieu of the best!

Today, we often are faced with the same thing. A little bit of harvest, a “significant” revival here, and another there, can too easily substitute for complete immersion into what God wants us to do. Rather than judging our successes by what others do, or by what we have done in the past, we should be careful to gauge our success according to the present will of the Lord. How much is really enough? Only God really knows. The Church must continue to strike with the arrows of spiritual deliverance until the Master declares, “It is enough.” It will never be sufficient to look like a king, talk like a king, or simply dress like a king; we must act like one.

Another That Is Better Than She

They had celebrated long and hard. For six months, Artaxerxes had wined and dined his Persian princes, glorying in the greatness of their world-dominating strength. Now, at the close of that festival, he had begun yet another party for all those that lived at the great palace in Susa. After enough wine, the king and his cohorts were ready to feast their eyes on the renowned beauty of the king’s wife, Vashti. This was certainly an interesting name, because in the Persian language it meant simply, a beautiful and excellent woman. Perhaps that was all she really was to Artaxerxes. We may never really know. But the time came when she was called for to reveal her beauty before the royal entourage, and she refused to appear. We do not know why. Perhaps it was pure indignation. Perhaps she misunderstood what her husband intended to do with her before the company. Whatever the reasons, she refused the command.

The king and his wise men became furious. They wondered at the possible ramifications throughout the kingdom when other wives of other men learned that Vashti was able to refuse the desire and commands of her husband. Something, they reasoned, had to be done! After some small discussion, they decided to write an edict, an addition to the law of the Persians and the Medes. Vashti was commanded to never again appear before the king. And it was declared, “...and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she.” (*Esther 1:19*) The wording is worth our attention here.

Was it just wishful thinking that there would be another woman somewhere in the kingdom that was in fact better than Vashti? Or was it a simple fact? Was it true indeed that there was someone waiting somewhere to take the place of this beautiful and excellent woman? As we continue to read this great Book of Esther, we discover that “appearing before the king” takes a special emphasis in its theme. Some Bible commentators write that Vashti was justified in her refusal to appear before these drunken leaders. Whether it was morally right or wrong, however, the fact remains that Vashti refused, she was found guilty by her king/husband, and one “that was better than she” replaced her. The former queen was certainly singular. She was excellent and beautiful. She was the only one called for to appear in front of the king’s friends. She held a special place in his eyes, no doubt. Yet, there was always one that was better than she. She was, therefore, singular, yet replaceable!

The Jewish heroine of the book is of course Esther. She is positioned by the will of God to become the very replacement for Vashti. It is fascinating to note, nonetheless, that Esther is tested in a similar way after her coronation. She is not commanded as Vashti was to come and appear before the men as they drink themselves into a stupor, but she does have a divine appointment in front of the king that is too important to miss. Her appearance before the king would be one of intercession for a doomed race of people. The Jews had been wrongfully accused and persecuted by an evil and jealous assistant to the king. Haman was bent on the total destruction of the Jewish people, and it would be up to Esther to bring their deliverance. Like Joash, she would be asked to bring salvation to her people, but there would be no prophet by her side to declare when enough was enough. In fact, she would have to be willing to give her all in the name of rescuing the Jews.

Somehow, Esther had to appear before the king to make her request. The problem, however, was the Persian law. It prohibited unsolicited visits to the king. Should a man or woman appear uninvited before the king, and should he not extend his scepter as a symbol of permission to speak, it was a crime punishable by death. This is what Esther was asked to do. She must appear without any guarantee of being received by Artaxerxes. Vashti had been invited, yet she refused. Now, Esther must appear, but was not invited! While it might seem that these two cases are diametrically opposed, they have, in fact, a very common thread between them. In *Esther 4:14*, we read the words of Esther’s relative and advisor Mordecai, “*For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*” Both women were summoned to appear

before their king. Should either of them refuse, there was already someone else in place that could replace them. Both would be called, but would they answer that call?

Our Lord and Savior is certainly not a drunken and reveling king, but surely He takes a righteous pride in the beauty of His beloved Church. Who really knows how many times He has called on her to appear before the world and show forth His glory as reflected by her beauty. And who knows how many different times and in how many places she has refused to obey. To refuse this command to step forward and be the queen that we were called to be means that another will be chosen. And like the burden of Esther, if we are not the ones to appear in a strong intercessory capacity, who will be called to replace us in saving the lost world? Two things are certain here: the Lord will have a beautiful Church that obeys His will; and if we as individuals fail in our personal obligation of true ministry to others, there is one better than we are that will be found to replace us.

Mountain Moving

After Peter had expressed his astonishment over the withered fig tree, Jesus told His disciples, *“Have faith in God.”* He did not stop there, however. He went on to tell them in Mark 11:23-24, *“Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”* This certainly sounds like a great kind of faith—a faith that could move a mountain! But it may not be so extraordinary after all. It may, in fact, be a kind of “normal” faith that should abide in true followers of Jesus’ plan. Hopefully, when moving mountains by faith, we have a goal in mind! There should be a clearly understood reason behind such a supernatural event. And perhaps that was what the apostle Paul was trying to say in 1 Corinthians 13:2 when he wrote, *“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”* In other words, all of the gifts, and all of the great faith that truly does move mountains, must surely be connected to the mission in mind and it must be motivated by love. There are indeed three that abide: faith, hope, and charity; but the greatest of these, Paul told us, is charity.

In all of our searching to become the people that we should be, let us not forget that the Great Commission is still as true today as it ever was. We have a clearly defined goal: saving others from the fire. The gifts will be there as needed; the faith necessary to remove any stumbling block or impediment will be available to those that are truly devoted to providing fruit for the Master. Shiny leaves will never be enough for Jesus. When He stops at our fig tree, what will the Lord find?

Chapter Two

THE REALITIES OF REVIVAL

“Instead, we will lovingly follow the truth at all times-- speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly-- and so become more and more in every way like Christ who is the Head of his body, the Church. Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly, and each part in its own special way helps the other parts, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”
--Ephesians 4:15-16 The Living Bible

A Healthy Body Will Grow

Children grow. Plants grow. Animals grow. And in the above passage, Paul the Apostle lets us know that when the Body of Christ functions as it should, with each part contributing its necessary share, the spiritual organism we call the Church will also grow. Not only is the Lord the Head of this body, He is also the Creator of each of its individual parts. Paul tells us that Jesus has carefully placed each one in its perfect place, in close harmony with its neighboring piece, and that each of these parts aids in helping the others to be all that they must be as well. The result is then clearly seen: good health, growing, and full of the love of God.

Jesus said it rather simply in Matthew 16:18, *“...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* Later on, alone with His disciples shortly before His arrest, He went on in great detail concerning the growth of the soon to be born Church. In John 15 Jesus uses the analogy of the vine and the branches to teach the principle that those in Him would produce fruit. He also used it to warn against being barren and thereby pruned from the vine. He went on to say that the Father is glorified when we bear such fruit. Then, in verse 16, Jesus tells them, *“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”* The last part of the verse is extremely interesting when we consider it in the context of what Jesus was actually saying. The vine is the supplier for the branches, and whatever we might need in the production of fruit will surely be supplied. We have a right and an obligation to ask for whatever we need in the carrying out of His will—the production of good fruit that will remain. He is ever ready to provide these needs. It is already promised and the harvest is guaranteed!

The Realities Of Revival

One of the first things we need to realize concerning the reality of revival and/or harvest is that *it must be understood biblically*. This may seem like a funny and rather useless statement, but the sad truth is that sometimes we base our assessment of the current “revival” on vain rhetoric rather than a biblical perspective. Church growth is a very easy thing to talk about because people in this great Church want to hear about it. Whether or not it matches God’s idea of real growth or really significant harvest is another matter! Another way of looking at this reality is by realizing that revival may be

present and all around us, yet we personally are not part of it. There is an inherent “danger” of being associated with a revival-minded organization. *While the body is experiencing growth, we in the local congregations might not.* And there is a strong temptation then to believe that since we are part of the organization that is growing, we are therefore growing too. But is that a reasonable conclusion? A dead or dying local assembly in the midst of other churches that are growing well cannot rightly conclude that they are having growth in their own congregation. Yet, they may say, they are part of something alive and well and growing. The same danger applies to individual saints in a growing assembly. While others are using the gifts and talents that God gave them for growing His Church, some saints may sit and abrogate their personal responsibilities to others. They eventually become good at nothing more than acting like Christians, yet being personally unproductive and in danger of being pruned from the precious vine of Jesus. Again, they might say, or even boast, that they are part of a growing congregation that is really “in revival.” Unfortunately, they as individuals are not part of that revival.

In Matthew 13:52 Jesus said, *“Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.”* What He was saying is simply this: when we dedicate ourselves to becoming real students of the Word of God, we will find great treasures within us that can be brought out and used to accomplish great things. Jesus promised His followers that they would be preachers, teachers, and witnesses for Him. But He also told them to wait until they were endued with power from on high before attempting to do what they were commissioned to do. They would first need the power and the direction of the Spirit, and then add the special anointing of love that comes with it to really be the light of the world that Jesus wanted them to be. So an understanding of the biblical perspective of real church growth is vital to the instruction that Jesus mentioned in the above scripture in Matthew. This brings us to another reality concerning the revival of today.

Several great principles of harvest can be gleaned from the fourth chapter of Mark. In this chapter we find the parable of the sower and the seed. It wasn't a long sermon at all that Jesus taught that day. In fact, it only took a few moments to describe the actions and results of the farmer's efforts. The reaction of the crowd, however, demonstrates the impact that this “little teaching” had on them. Though Jesus had addressed a multitude of so-called followers, by the time he finished the short account of the seed and the different types of soil it fell upon, there were only a few that remained behind and asked Him concerning the point of the message. To them He said, *“Unto you is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.”* Jesus had used a parable to separate the wheat from the chaff. He taught this little story to those who really wanted to know more about the kingdom. When they stayed behind and asked Him about the meaning of the parable, Jesus gladly explained it to them. Those that had left already had gone their way still bound by ignorance and unbelief.

After a clear explanation of the parable, Jesus in verse 24 explains, “*Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.*” Moffat’s translation puts it this way, “*With the measure you deal out to others it will be dealt out to yourselves and you will receive extra.*” Therefore, the second reality tells us that in order to understand revival biblically, ***we must desire to really understand without compromising.*** We have to be careful with what we hear and what we do with these precious truths that we have been given. Jesus’ principle is this: to get more, we must use what we have already. The desire to understand is not always easy though. Unfortunately, the temptation to compromise is always present in us. In fact, it seems that the Lord Himself actually offers us opportunities to hear and go home without a real understanding. It seems that in some ways He is still communicating in parables! Do we want to know the meaning behind it?

Not long after the birth of this great Church in Acts 2, we read about the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the Temple in chapter 3. Not only is this a true account of a magnificent and supernatural deliverance, it also presents us with great spiritual symbolism. The poor crippled man was accustomed to being brought to the same place each day where he hoped to find the same little offerings that would sustain him for twenty-four more hours in his pitiful existence. He was quite used to it. In fact, he was so used to receiving this minimum that he nearly missed the will of God on the fateful day of his healing. As Peter and John focused their gaze on him in Acts 3:5, we are told, “*And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.*” Unfortunately, he was expecting to receive the wrong thing! In the presence of powerfully anointed men of God, and with the Lord wanting to heal him and change his life forever, the lame man was simply intent on finding the bare minimum as usual.

This is not so unlike much of what we experience. Have we settled on being spiritually crippled when God’s will is for us to be mightily healed and used in the kingdom? Are we used to receiving so little that we cannot recognize the intervention of God when He wants to take us to a new level of spiritual depth? How many times, in church services for example, have we settled for less than God’s best? Do we come to church expecting the very minimum or the very maximum? Sadly enough, the potential to compromise is ever before us. Too many times we may find ourselves expecting to receive the wrong things. The Vine wants to give us all things that are beneficial to our spiritual health in order that we may bring forth much fruit. We must not settle for less than what He wants for our lives and our personal ministries and we should desire to fully understand our individual parts in God’s revival scheme.

In Mark 8:22-25 we can read the curious story of Jesus praying twice for a certain blind man. Certainly Jesus did not require two prayers for a healing—He was the Almighty robed in flesh! Instead, he used the double prayer to illustrate an important point. After praying the first time, He asked the man if he saw anything. The man replied with the famous words, “I see men as trees, walking.” In other words, I can see that there are men, but they are nothing more than indistinguishable figures to me. Then and only then did Jesus pray the second time. Asked again what he saw, the poor man declared, “I can see every man clearly!” This should be the revelation that we have as

well. Our aim must be more than seeing men in a vague and compromised way. We need to see every man clearly in order to understand the real need of true revival in our midst. What if the man had replied the first time, “Thanks Jesus, that will be enough for me. After all, I’m better now than before.” Or, “Thank you that I can see a little bit more than my neighbor.” What if he would have left the presence of the Healer with only a partial touch? When is enough really going to be enough? And who decides that it is enough? Have we heard enough preaching and teaching that we need no more? And when we do hear it, does it have the impact it should? How do we express our desire to fully understand the biblical perspective of spiritual harvest and revival?

“I Cannot Come Down”

Things were moving along very well in Jerusalem. The walls were now rebuilt, and only the doors and the gates were lacking. Nehemiah had succeeded in leading a massive effort to build as quickly and efficiently as possible. Despite the odds and all the impediments that had stood in his way, the man of God had persevered and the walls were in place. Then one day, Nehemiah received a message asking him to attend a meeting with two men, Sanballat and Geshem. They wanted to meet with him in a village in the plain Ono, but Nehemiah rightly perceived their strategy as one of compromise. His answer is one we would do well to remember. In Nehemiah 6:3, he replies, *“I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?”* No one would have found fault if Nehemiah would have stopped at this point of the project. After all, someone else might pick up the task. And, he had certainly done a marvelous work up to that point. But Nehemiah rightly judged the danger in ceasing to complete the task that God had given him to do. Doing more than someone else, or doing more than ever before in our own experience does not qualify the task as complete. God’s revival is an ever-growing one. We need the same depth of commitment that Nehemiah felt, because for him the work was not finished. When will our work really be finished? Perhaps it might be a good idea to remember the proposed meeting place with Sanballat and Geshem—in fact, it should become our reply when offered what might be called a good-looking compromise: let’s just say, “Oh no!”

Open And Closed Doors

The third reality concerning God’s revival is that *the time for seeing it is now*. It started in Acts 2 with the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and it is God’s will that it continue throughout these end times. Peter preached it clearly: *“But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel...”* (Acts 2:16) We are not waiting for God to do anything special. To the contrary, He’s probably waiting on us to do something special!

In the midst of terrible persecution, the early Church of Acts needed a full assurance that what they were doing was the will of God. There could be no room for doubt that it was the time and place for revival. These were men who hazarded their lives for the gospel and there was too much to lose if they were wrong. In Acts 4, Peter and John were apprehended by the Jewish rulers in Jerusalem and severely threatened. They were

commanded to never preach or teach again in the name of Jesus. They answered strongly that they were compelled to continue witnessing about what they had personally experienced. They then called for the church to come together and pray with them. They prayed for boldness and courage. Why? They knew that they were called, and they had the strong conviction that this was the time for an apostolic move of the Holy Ghost in them and through them! During the prayer meeting, the house where they were assembled shook with God's powerful witness that they were fully in His will. Then, again in chapter 5 they are arrested and brought before the authorities for the crime of preaching the truth. The answer in verse 29 is a well-known one, "*We ought to obey God rather than men.*" How true and how powerful this statement is! In the face of doubt, threats and open persecution, this should be our response: *the time is now for what we must do!* It started in Acts 2 and is continuing today if we will but enter into it with the same kind of dedication and spiritual resolve that the apostles had.

Much has been written concerning the messages to the "angels of the seven churches" of Revelation chapters 2 and 3. Some see them as simple letters to different parts of the early Church, others as the "evolution" of the Church through its various stages. Whatever may be the actual intent and definite meaning of the letters, it is worth noting the last two of these "letters." The messages to the church of Philadelphia and to the church of Laodicea have something in common. They also are the last two to be addressed before what many theologians believe to be the timing of the Rapture of the Church. The commonality in these two passages in Revelation 3 is a *door*.

The two churches are described differently, with different spirits completely. Philadelphia is shown to be a faithful group that has kept the word of the Lord's patience through times of difficulty. A promise is given to those who will be overcomers and eventually known as pillars in the temple of God. When trials were so hard in the church there, the saints kept a little strength and never denied the name (or the will) of the Lord. In verses 7-8, however, we read of the secret to this enduring faithfulness. The Lord had set before them an open door, a door that no man could shut. This was a door that had been opened by God Himself, and once opened, no man had the power to close it. And it was a door that, when closed by the Lord, no man was able to reopen it. For the faithful of the church in Philadelphia, the key to their reward lay in working and living their faith by an *open door experience*. Their door was open, the time was right, and no man could shut the opportunities that were in front of them. They simply were obedient to the call and the time.

Later in verses 15-19, however, we read of a different spirit completely. The saints in the Laodicean church had become self-satisfied and foolish in their outlook on Christian life. They were "rich" and increased with goods to the point of considering themselves as in need of nothing. In actual fact, the Lord labeled them as "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked." What a combination of attributes for a church! Then, in verse 20, we read of another door. This is a door that has been closed by men, and the Lord is unable to open it! Rather, He stands at the door and gently knocks, hoping that someone inside will open so that He can enter and truly fellowship with him. If the door is not opened *from the inside*, the Laodiceans will forever be left in their pitiful and carnal condition.

Yet the promise of overcoming is still there for them, too. All it takes is opening this door.

Today's Church must recognize the need for complete submission to the Lord, and also the need for response according to the times in which we live. We really are closer to the coming of the Lord than ever before. There really are more lost souls than ever before. And a self-centered and inward assessment that declares that we have somehow reached the height of holiness and now are in need of nothing will only preclude the promised revival. The time for revival is indeed right now!

Good Soil

The last reality of revival to consider in this chapter is that it is based simply on *producing healthy saints in every local church*. While the mathematics may not be exact, the logic is still valid: in the story of the sower and the seed, at least one-fourth of the seed made its way to good soil. The mechanics of this principle are very pure and promising. Good seed planted on good soil will begin to grow. Proper care and follow-up will ensure a good harvest. Therefore, anything that would impede the above needs to be corrected (or even eliminated) from our programs in the Church. The goal simply needs to be bringing saints to the place of being knowledgeable concerning the seed and the soil. It's not even much a matter of skill at this point, but one of teaching and then experience. How does one recognize good ground? What kind of seed should be sown? What is the right timing in certain portions of the harvest field? Beyond that, God takes over in many ways.

Referring once more to Mark 4, we read in verses 28-29, "*For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.*" We don't always have to know how it happens, but we certainly need to be assured that it will happen!

We started this chapter by stating that a healthy church will grow. In later chapters describing the six principles of revival, we will look very closely at how to produce healthy members in healthy congregations. The reality of today's harvest potential must get inside of all of us, and must also flow out from us to saturate others. The role of leadership in today's Church is to ensure the spiritual health of the membership and to equip the saints with the tools necessary for being the witnesses that the Lord has called them to be. The time is right, the power is available, the direction is clear, and the burden is strong. Let's put our hands to the plow and see a harvest like never before!

Chapter Three

THE REALITIES OF THE CHURCH

“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge.” --Psalm 48:1-3

What a privilege it is to be part of this great Church: the body of Christ, the called out ones, the Bride, the Church that Jesus vowed He would build! The Old Testament foretells its greatness in the plan of God, and the New Testament describes its conception and first stages of growth throughout the ancient world. Though the author of the above psalm may not be known today, and though the subject when written may have been the city of Jerusalem, this psalm stands as a prophetic description of the glorious assembly of the faithful. Jesus had told His disciples in John 14:16-17, *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”* No wonder then that this Church is called the body of Christ in Paul’s writing in Ephesians 1:22-23, *“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.”* The Phillips Translation of the New Testament in Modern English puts the last part of verse 23 as *“...which is his body, and in that body lives fully the one who fills the whole universe.”* The One who fills the universe is the very One who is the Head of the body! And in Colossians 1:26-27 Paul wrote, *“Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”* Indeed it is a privilege to be part of the culmination of God’s plan that has been the same from before the foundation of the world.

Jesus is building His Church. The very best that we, the body, can do is to cooperate with Him in this great task. To the disciples in John 14:12 Jesus said, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”* The last part of the statement, *“because I go unto my Father,”* speaks of the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh after the resurrection of the Lord. Because Jesus made the sacrifice described in Philippians 2:7-8, we are now able to be partakers of the promise of Philippians 2:13, *“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”* In other words, Jesus is building His Church by working in and through the members of that body. As we saw in Chapter Two, each member of the Church is destined by God to be fitted perfectly into his special place in the body, and in turn, each contributes to the health and growth of the same. It is clear, therefore, that ***the first reality of the Church is that it will be instrumental in the revival that God wants to bring.*** After all, Jesus is the Head of that body, and He knows perfectly how to build this Church. His timing is perfect, His wisdom is without end, and His power is limitless. And, as Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:25-27, *“...Christ also loved the church, and gave*

himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” It will be a perfect Church, constructed by a perfect Builder.

The Lord’s Controversy

“Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

--Micah 6:6-8

There is yet another reality concerning the Church: ***it consists of people, and people often fail***. And this explains why, even though Jesus is the Head of this body, there is not always great revival in every nation, every province, or every city or village. In some ways this appears paradoxical. Here is the Almighty in His Church, building that same Church, without any limitations at all within Him, yet somehow constrained by the frailties of our flesh. In other words, He can do anything, but He is working through us, and therefore the revival and the building of His Church is subject to our willingness to be part of what God is willing and desirous to do.

After His resurrection, Jesus told His disciples in John 20:21, *“Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”* Jesus had certainly responded to the call, but what if they would not go? Would there have been a Day of Pentecost outpouring if there wasn’t a crowd praying in the upper room that day? In Acts 1:8 we read, *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”* But in verse 11 of the same chapter, two angels have to tell the same disciples, *“Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?”* To paraphrase this question in a very modern way might read as, *“You won’t receive this power just described by standing around here! Go on into Jerusalem and find what you need for this great commission.”*

The above verses from the Book of Micah describe a controversy that the Lord had with Israel. Earlier in the chapter, God had reminded them of how He had led them out of bondage in Egypt, and how he had sent them great men like Moses to lead them. He had done everything that was needed to bring them to the place where they could both reflect His glory and enjoy His benefits, yet He found Himself in a controversy with these people. In verse 6 the prophet declares the futility of bringing the offerings of the past before this God. He asks the rhetorical question concerning whether or not an offering of thousands of rams would please the Lord. He goes so far as to say that even the offering of his own firstborn child could not hide his transgressions from God. Then, in verse 8, the simple answer to pleasing God is revealed. Doing what is right according to His

Spirit, appreciating the mercies extended by Him, and walking in cooperation and harmony with Him is really all that is required of a man. To put it plainly, the Lord is not interested in what we have to give; He is interested in us! Rather than a multitude of substitute offerings that we might give on an altar, *He really wants us on that altar.* More than the money in the offering basket, more than the fine clothes on a bright Sunday morning, and more than an outward appearance of holiness, He simply seeks a people that will be completely surrendered to Him and His will. Hebrews 10:5-6 tells of Jesus' own sacrifice: "*Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.*" This passage is taken from Psalm 40, where even while hundreds of sacrifices were being made at the altar, the Psalmist had the keen spiritual insight to know that there is really only one true offering that will be acceptable in God's sight. Were the Old Testament sacrifices necessary? Absolutely, but only in the sense of offering oneself as the sacrifice is given. It is still true in today's Church. Are offerings required today? Is the outward standard of Christian holiness necessary? For sure these and many others are still necessary, but they should be given as a result of our consecration, not in order to find it. In other words, *we do what we do because we are changed, not to prove that we are acceptable.* True dedication and commitment to the cause begin in one's heart. God's revival today demands that kind of consecration, and it is one for which there is no substitute.

Standing Outside And Looking In

How embarrassing it must have been for Mary and her sons that day. Jesus was at someone's house, teaching a great number of interested people. There were so many people there, in fact, that when Mary and Jesus' brothers finally arrived, there was no room for them in the house, and it was even difficult to send a message inside to Him. At last, someone brought the news to the Lord that His mother and his brothers were standing outside and desiring to see Him. In Luke 8:21 we read His reply, "*My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.*" This was not some cruel lapse of Jesus' kindness; it was, rather, a strict enforcement of a godly principle. And it represents a third reality concerning the Church. ***We must not take for granted our position in Christ.*** We might wonder why Jesus' mother and brothers were so late in getting to the house. Whatever the reason or excuse might have been, it seems that they expected a kind of "preferential treatment" once they arrived, but Jesus would have no part of it. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 10:2 about Israel's problem of having zeal, but not according to knowledge. Perhaps here with Jesus' mother and brothers they had knowledge but were lacking in zeal! To be in the family of God is certainly the necessary beginning, but His true family consists of those that both hear the Word of God and then do it. Jesus told His disciples in John 15:7-8, "*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*" Standing on the outside, they had asked to be recognized inside and were apparently ignored. But the Lord later said the above to His disciples, proving that when we are engaged in His business, and totally submitted to His will, we can ask for anything and it will be done. We cannot ask for things outside of His divine purpose and expect them, however. It's

really a matter of perspective, and that will depend on our real understanding of our true position.

Position, Perspective, And Priorities

Because of who we are and because of our position in Christ, the Church must maintain a proper perspective on reality. And this perspective that exists in the Kingdom of God is unlike any in the world! Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4:18, “*While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*” That should be our outlook on things. We must, as Colossians 3:1-2 tells us, “*...seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*” This is what David was referring to in Psalm 37:4 when he wrote, “*Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*” This wasn’t some kind of “free pass” that allows the saints to covet and expect just anything of which they might conceive. It means as we are more and more given to His will, we begin to see what He sees and we start to understand the path that He has ordained for our lives. We can then pray in His will and according to new desires that have been cultivated by Him in our hearts. And when we pray in this manner, He will grant those desires!

It is no wonder then that Paul continued in 2 Corinthians 5:15-16 by saying, “*And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.*” In other words, we see differently now. This presents the fourth reality of the Church: ***we can and must see what others choose to ignore.*** If we do not, we will miss completely the opportunity to engage in Jesus’ revival movement. Paul preached to the Corinthians concerning the way in which the apostles and other Church leaders viewed humanity. It was no longer “after” or according to the flesh. They could see, after their full conversion, the needs so prevalent in their world. They could see like never before the true need of mankind in terms of salvation. Even their understanding of the man Christ Jesus had changed, now that they could really see. To understand our position in Christ, that special place in the body of Christ upon the earth, means that we must learn to look at things the way that He does. And that will lead us to new priorities. Paul went so far as to say that the love of Christ (moving firstly in them, and then through them) “constrained” them. The word for “constrain” there is the Greek word, *sunecho*, meaning that they were “held fast” by this love. They were caught in a flow of God’s love to others through their ministry of reconciliation. It cannot be any different with us.

Tasty Fish

All the way around, it was a very difficult night. Jesus had shown Himself to the disciples after His resurrection more than once already. But now, it had been several days since the last comforting time in His presence. Jesus had said in Matthew 28:7 that He would one day find His disciples in Galilee and that they should go and plan on

meeting Him there. But until that night, He was nowhere to be seen. For three years the disciples had enjoyed the miraculous provision that Jesus had made for their daily needs. They had been entertained in different homes, sometimes eating and sleeping well, and other times learning to simply trust. But this night in John 21, Peter fell into the terrible place of having to make a choice without the benefit of Jesus' felt presence to help him. There was no food, no money, no Jesus, no direction; what should they do? Peter made an executive decision in verse 3 when he said to the others, "*I go a fishing.*" And they replied, "*We also go with thee.*" There, it was done; the decision had been made and the way had been cleared. They would go back *to what they knew how to do by themselves*. After all, if there was no Jesus to help them, surely they weren't expected to do any more than that!

These were fishermen from Galilee. They knew how to do it, where to do it, and they knew for a certainty what they should expect. But that night, the Bible tells us, they caught nothing! Not one fish made its way into the net that night. For all of their efforts and all of their knowledgeable experience, they had nothing to show for it. Why? They were looking for the wrong kind of fish.

While they labored on the lake, Jesus was resting comfortably on the shore, with fish and bread already on the fire. When finally Peter realized that it was Jesus calling to them, he was the first one to abandon the fishing boat and swim his way to the Lord on the beach. It must have been with a mix of humility and relief that the disciples sat down to feast with Jesus that morning following the disastrous fishing expedition. It was certainly true, and now very obvious to them, that without Him, they could do nothing. Jesus' invitation to "come and dine" was never more welcome than on that bleak dawn.

But coming and dining brought Peter to an even deeper test of his understanding and his commitment. It was after that delicious meal of fish and bread when Jesus looked at him and asked in John 21:15, "*Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?*" What exactly were "these?" The Greek word found there is *touton*, which as a pronoun can substitute for either people or things. It seems somehow doubtful that Jesus was challenging whether or not Peter loved Him more than he loved the others that had just eaten with them. What would that mean anyway? But it could very well be that Peter was being asked, "Do you love me more than these fish that you have just enjoyed?" Living for God, being a true follower or disciple of Jesus Christ is more than just rejoicing in what He has to give. He did, after all, say that it was more blessed to give than to receive. The whole chapter centers upon this fishing trip that Simon Peter had decided upon. From the failure to catch fish with the net to the tasty meal of fish and bread prepared by the Lord, the story revolves around this one theme: which fish most interests you, Peter? Is it the fish in the lake? Or, is it the fish that only Jesus can cook on an open fire by the lakeshore? Or, is it the fish that need to be caught for the sake of their salvation.

Surely, that night, as Jesus asked Peter three separate times if he loved Him, Peter must have reflected on the day that Jesus first found him and declared in Luke 5:10, "*Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.*" That was forever destined to be the

new priority for Simon Peter's life. Whatever the trial or difficulty that may confront him, Peter was to have the firm resolve that there could be no compromising on this issue. For Peter, and for us today, this is the fifth reality of the Church: ***we must choose to be part of this revival that God has ordained.*** There is no looking back and trying to pick up the old ways; all things are become new.

Burned Yokes

In 1 Kings 19:19-21 we read the remarkable story of Elisha's call to the prophetic ministry in Israel. The great man of God, Elijah, now aged and near to his departure from this earthly life, had been instructed by the Lord to anoint Elisha in his place. He obeyed, and in a very simple yet symbolic gesture, cast his mantle over the shoulders of the younger man. Elisha immediately knew *the source of the call*, and more importantly, knew *the cost of obedience to the calling*. Elisha asked if he could go back to his parents' house and bid them goodbye, to which Elijah replied in a seemingly brusque manner, "*Go back again: for what have I done unto thee?*" Some translators have put it as a harsh reply, others interpret it as a simple, "You choose." The French Louis Segond translation conveys it very neatly, "Go, and then come back; think about what I have done to you." Or, in other words, this is your decision, and only yours to make. Elijah could not choose for him; this was Elisha's day of destined choice.

Elijah needed not to worry, though. Elisha's response was clear enough when he took a pair of the oxen that he had been plowing with, killed them, and roasted their flesh using the wood of the yoke for firewood. Could there be more symbolism than that? Elisha was making it abundantly clear to everyone, including himself, that once he started down this road with Elijah, there would be no returning to the old way of doing things. His position had changed. His perspective had changed. And now his priorities were starting to change too.

Certainly there are many "realities" concerning the Church, but these five stand out in relation to the Church's place in the end-time harvest and revival to which we are engaged. It is much too easy to get side tracked with programs and religious traditions and forget the priorities that are always before us, beckoning us forward to more and more consecration.

- 1) The Church is instrumental in God's plan for revival/harvest.
- 2) The Church, however, consists of people; and often people fail.
- 3) The Church must not take for granted its position in Christ.
- 4) The Church can and must see with God's help what others have chosen to ignore.
- 5) The Church must choose to be part of the revival that God has ordained and never compromise.

Nothing can change these realities. Our response to these is key in predicting our success as the Church, whether on a local, regional, national, or international level. We must *choose* to be part and allow nothing to lure us away from the greatest task of all.

Chapter Four

THE KEY PLAYERS IN REVIVAL

“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” -- 2 Timothy 2:2

These words of the Apostle Paul to his son in the gospel, Timothy, are often quoted and taught in the Church today. But are they strictly followed and ultimately practiced? There really are “key players” in the harvest that God has ordained for His Church. They are key in the sense that we need to understand that they play a most important part in that revival, and therefore we must direct our efforts more than ever before to ensure that these key people are empowered and equipped for their respective roles. Chapter Seven is devoted to a discussion about how to effectively equip (and how to know that it is effective.) And, in Chapter Eight we will look at what is called “The Nucleus” of the local church, the members with whom we will actually be able to work in the harvest. It also details suggestions on how to identify who is part of this nucleus. But in this chapter, we will explore three areas in which the key players in revival must be considered. Let’s call these three areas: 1) the role of the saints as key players; 2) the role of church leadership as key players; 3) the dedication necessary in the key players.

As was seen in Chapter Two, a healthy church is a growing church. It can also be said that a growing church is a healthy one. The two qualities feed off of each other. When we speak about the “health” of a church, we are, of course, speaking about the spiritual health of the membership. Each saint that is happily growing and fulfilling his or her role in the church’s expansion in ministry is a healthy part of the body. And this is what ultimately produces church growth—healthy saints. Therefore, it becomes clear that what we must really pursue is this spiritual health in every member of the Church. Every sermon, every song, and every program must somehow contribute to that end, or else we find ourselves trying to build on sinking sand, rather than on the solid rock. Creating the climate for real church growth means exhorting, encouraging, and instructing the members in establishing and exercising sound principles of spiritual health.

Paul wrote to the saints at Rome in chapter 12, verse 2, *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* As we saw in the previous chapter, when we begin to understand our position in Christ, we begin to have a new perspective on what real life is all about. And in turn, this brings us to new priorities for our individual lives and personal ministries. This is what renewing of the mind really means—a new way of thinking, or like the writer to the Hebrews said in Hebrews 12:2, *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...”* As a result of the renewing of our minds, we will experience the will of God in our lives and see that it is:

- Good because it has the right objective for us and for the world around us
- Acceptable because it is right for the Lord and it is agreeable to us

- Perfect because it is complete and lacking nothing to prevent its accomplishment.

To put it plainly then, *we are the key players in the revival*. As much as we give ourselves to His cause, that is how much we will be useful in the end time harvest. And if we shirk the call and the responsibility of responding to the call, we will be excluded from participating in the greatest movement the world has ever known. Our response or lack thereof does not change the calling, however. All that Israel ever needed to become the people that God had called them to be was freely given to them. But they mistook it and they abused the grace bestowed upon them to the point that the blessings once given had become curses instead. The Goodspeed American Translation of the New Testament phrases Romans 11:29, “*For God does not change his mind about those to whom he gives his blessings or sends his call.*” Unfortunately, however, he cannot use someone opposed to His will and purpose! The Church will provide the key players for this revival, but will we as individuals be a part of that great team?

The Key Players Are Saints

It seems obvious that the Lord Jesus was most effective in ministry that was “one on one.” It is true that we often find Him speaking to the multitudes that thronged after Him as He performed miracles and taught strange and new doctrines. But just in the Book of John, for example, we see Him singling out men and women for special encounters. Nicodemus, the woman at the well of Samaria, the man at the pool of Bethesda, the woman taken in adultery, the blind man of chapter nine, Pilate in the judgment hall, Thomas after the resurrection, and Simon Peter at the Sea of Galilee are all examples of Jesus’ special and individualized ministry. It is no different today. He still ministers to individuals, and He does it through the individual members of His body. What we call “mass evangelism” certainly has its place in the overall scheme of reaching the lost, but nothing can ever replace the love and ministry demonstrated by one person to another.

Jesus prayed with the disciples in John 17:18, “*As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.*” It’s not a different ministry at all! It is still Jesus working with individuals, only now it is through us. As His love impacted so many in the Gospels, so should we be responsible for touching the lives of those around us. But this can only happen when we allow His great love to flow through us. As Paul said in Romans 5:5, “*...because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*” In this passage Paul confirms that the seal of the Spirit of God on our lives is not only a seal of faith, but also a proof that He forever loves us. If this is so, how can we ignore the need of letting this love touch others? And this is something that cannot take place through mass evangelism campaigns. It is done in homes, on the job, with our neighbors, etc. It is one person reaching one person. It is one family embracing another for their personal salvation. It is the apostles working intimately with the lame man at the Beautiful Gate, Philip with the Ethiopian eunuch, Ananias with Saul, Peter at Cornelius’ home, Paul with Lydia, Aquila and Priscilla with Apollos, and Paul and Silas at the Philippian jailer’s house. It is Jesus alive and well and working through His Church.

Each member of this great Church has his own talents and gifts. Some have been present since birth; others are learned or gained through experience. And while some people seem more talented than others, no member is better than another. Each is uniquely called and then placed in the body according to God's great wisdom. Paul warns the Romans in the twelfth chapter not to think of themselves more highly than they should because of this equality in the body. He simply exhorts them in Romans 12:6, "*Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, ...*" The same writer also told the Philippians, "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*" (Philippians 4:13) So while we realize that the power available to us is unlimited for the ministry whereunto we are called, we also know fully well that we share an equal importance in the body with the other members. What a great balance that exists in the Church!

One thing is for sure: building the Church is a work of God's Spirit and the carnal man simply cannot produce spiritual fruit. He can imitate it, however, and therein lies a hidden danger. The foundation of this discussion thus far has been that healthy and spiritual saints will produce other healthy members in the process of personal evangelism. If this is not happening, whether on a national or local church level, something is wrong. And this "something" lies in the area of the saints' spiritual health. Something is lacking in their diet, their care, their protection, or in their vision. In short, they are not being satisfactorily equipped for the task. Those in leadership cannot allow an outward semblance of spirituality produced through the flesh to substitute for the real thing. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10:3-4, "*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.*" In other words, we need to be very careful to treat the disease rather than just the symptoms. Putting a bandage on the outward man by making him "look" more holy may not cure the sickness that lies deep within him.

Many people in the Church seem to be "performance oriented," that is, they base their good standing with God upon what they do or how they look to others. In the kingdom of God, however, the reverse is actually true. We do what we do because we have been changed by the power of God. Jesus said it simply in Mark 2:22, "*And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.*" When God fills us with His Spirit, Paul said, old things are passed away and all things become new. As the change becomes more pronounced and as we yield more and more to God, the things that we do result from the new wine inside. We pray, we sing, we give, and we worship because we love Him and are loved by Him, not in order to be acceptable to Him. It is the same with our personal ministries. We minister to others because of the new wine experience, not to prove that we are worthy in God's sight. The motive is a pure and simple one: *we are filled with the Holy Ghost!* He has already made His Church worthy.

Leaders Are Key Players

Leaders, by definition, are different than the rest. Leaders give direction, they mentor, they inspire, and they are the ones that keep going when all else says to stop. But another important role played by church leadership is in the area of assessing and making correction. And this is not always an easy thing to do.

In the sixth chapter of the gospel of Luke we find the curious story of the man with the withered hand. It is curious in the sense of being so public. Jesus made no attempt to keep this miracle quiet as He did with so many others. This was done in plain view of everyone in the synagogue that day. In fact, before healing the crippled man, Jesus first asked him in verse 8, *“Rise up, and stand forth in the midst.”* Then in verse 10 He commanded him, *“Stretch forth thy hand.”* We do not know how long the man had been in this condition. Perhaps from his birth he had learned to accept life in a compromised sort of fashion, not having the full use or strength in both of his hands. Perhaps he kept this deficient hand out of view of the public most of the time. Perhaps it had even become a badge of shame for him. We don’t really know. But we do know that on that fateful day when he would receive this wonderful and miraculous touch of the Savior, he first had to stand in the midst of the crowd and reveal his handicap before the rest. So it is with leadership. Someone has to be willing to stand forth and take an honest look at the present state of the believers, whether at a national level, or in the local assembly. Someone in leadership must be willing to confess that where we are may not be where we should be. If the saints will be healthy enough to realize true revival, leaders first of all must know what condition they are presently in.

Some are ashamed to admit the truth concerning their part of the church’s condition. Others think that they would be displaying a “negative” attitude by admitting that much is lacking. Sometimes the subject of revival or harvest becomes a sensitive one; to admit that we are not in the midst of it sounds like doubt and unbelief. But in reality, we have to be honest and willing enough to see where we presently are in order to be able to take the necessary steps to move further in the right direction. That’s a price that leaders must pay. It is one of the key roles they play in this end time movement. Without a doubt, the Church will be the medium of the revival and the recipient of the harvest, but we must see it like God sees it to be effective and useful in His hands. This is a ministry of leadership that must be active at every level of responsibility and authority. At whatever level of responsibility we find ourselves, we should commit to making the necessary assessment in our realm of ministry. Are the saints evangelistic? Are they making new contacts regularly? Are they being the witnesses that the Holy Ghost wants them to be? If not, why not? What is lacking in the leaders’ ministry toward the body that has caused this breach? Are the saints involved in the ministry of edification? Are they fulfilling their personal responsibilities in helping to build up the body as they should? Are they showing a commitment to others and a dedication to making new disciples of the contacts the church has made? Sometimes the sad truth is that they are not. It isn’t always easy stretching out the hand of weakness in confession of true need, but the miraculous healing that comes afterwards is certainly worth it!

The Dedication Of Key Players

In the last chapter, The Realities Of The Church, the fifth reality stated that *we must choose to be part of the revival that God has ordained*. It is an active choice, not a passive observance that makes the difference between someone useful and someone useless! And nearly everything that the flesh or our adversary might wish for us is contrary to this godly desire that we must maintain. We are obliged to stand on guard against any compromising influence that would steer us away from the prize of spiritual revival and harvest in the Church. A remarkable passage that points this out very clearly is found in 1 Corinthians 10:1-12. Paul starts this chapter with an exhortation to be mindful of what happened to the Israelites during their wilderness experience after escaping Egyptian bondage. It should have been a joyous time of regularly witnessing the goodness and grace of God in provision and protection. Instead, it devolved into disaster for them. At the close of the passage, Paul reminds them that all of this happened to Israel to serve as examples unto us; that they are written for our admonition; upon us who live shortly before the end of the world. And he sums it up in saying that we should take heed when we think we are standing strong, for we may in fact be near to collapse. We should, therefore, be willing to take a close look at these “examples” for us and apply them to our own experience.

First of all, in verses 1-4, Paul tells us that all of the people passed under the same cloud, passed through the same sea, were committed to following Moses, ate the same spiritual manna, and drank the same miraculously provided water. In other words, they had exactly the same opportunities for growth and development. Each one had been given what was needed to be a true follower of the Lord throughout this time in the wilderness. Each of them was being trained for something: crossing over into the Promised Land. But verse 5 tells us that God was not at all pleased with many of them. While He constantly by His grace imparted blessing and protection, many mistook what He gave and failed to understand their part in His plan. It finally became so bad through their unbelief that the Lord turned them back into the wilderness when they should have been crossing Jordan and rejoicing in the promise. A two-year trip through the wilderness that was a qualifying process (in the mind of God) then turned into a forty-year ordeal through the wasteland for the purpose of disqualifying the unbelievers.

Then, starting in verse 6, we find a list five things that we must avoid today. Again, Paul tells us that these unfortunate actions by the Israelites serve as examples (poor ones for sure) to us in the Church. We are, after all, on a similar mission: escaping the bondage of sin in the world and making the journey through life into a great Promised Land. During the trip we should be growing, healthy and fruitful, adding to the church daily such as should be saved. Let’s look at these five sins that Israel committed and see how we can avoid them:

- **They lusted after evil things.** First of all, they were not happy with what the Lord was providing. They lusted for more. They longed for the leeks and the garlic of Israel. They grew tired of the miracle manna and cried for meat. They simply could not agree with the Lord’s plan for their lives during this

time of what should have been a deep reliance upon God. Today, we must be careful in realizing that what He gives is sufficient for us. And we must remind ourselves that what He chooses is always the best. Finally, we should be certain that what God has provided (and will continue to provide) is always for a divine purpose.

- **They were idolaters.** This means that they were not happy with God's style of leadership, nor with the authorities He placed over them during the journey. They tried at one point to create their own god! Searching for another god simply means dissatisfaction with the present one. But our Lord Jesus has a definite mission that He is carrying out. It is a perfect one and has a clear vision. He knows where He's going, and He certainly knows how to get there! Let's not second-guess our Lord. Let's submit to His plan.
- **They committed fornication.** This specifically refers to their mixing with and marrying into other tribes and faiths of the people around them in the wilderness. In Numbers 25 we read of 24,000 who died of a plague after Israel began to "commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab." The root of the problem, more than just a sexually illicit one, was that of their intended separation to the Lord God. He had called them to be a holy and separate people, unlike anyone else. Their attraction to the other tribes and their gods would only prove disastrous for Israel. Neither can we afford to compromise our stand of holiness in today's revival movement. As the Apostle Peter said it in 1 Peter 2:9, "*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*" We don't need to be like anyone else; we need to be exactly the way He designed us, perfectly suited for the specific task He has placed before us.
- **They tempted God.** "Fiery serpents" killed many of the Israelites one day. They were destroyed because they had forgotten something very important. In Numbers 21:5, they spoke against Moses and against God and complained about why they had been brought "out of Egypt to die in the wilderness." They cried that there was no bread, nor was there enough water. But the fact was that there was enough of everything really necessary for their survival and their successful entry into Canaan. What they had forgotten was crucial: they had forgotten the promise! God had not brought them out to die; He had brought them out to live! He had them there for a divine purpose, and all they had to do was continue with Him in order to one day enter into the promise. Is it any different for us today? Is there a revival? There most assuredly is, and the way to participate is to continue in God's direction, doing what He asks us to do.
- **They murmured.** After Moses had sent the twelve spies to survey Canaan, they returned bringing two different kinds of reports. While Joshua and Caleb declared Israel's ability with God to conquer and possess the promise, the other ten decried its impossibility. The reaction of the people was swift: in Numbers 14:2 we read, "*And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would God we had died in the*

wilderness!” In other words, they were not at all happy with God’s will for their lives. How could they have known the future? How could they have supposed that they knew more than God? The Lord tells us in Isaiah 55:8-9, “*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*” And Paul wrote in Romans 11:33, “*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*” They murmured, they doubted, they complained, and they figured out “better ways” of doing things. At least they thought they did. This last sin in the list must not be allowed to prevent us from entering into the revival that awaits. His will, after all, is good, and acceptable, and perfect. What is there to really murmur about?

This is the dedication that has to be shown in those that will be the key players in revival and harvest. Any compromise here means a downward spiral taking us further and further away from the Promised Land of significant church growth. There will always be key players on all levels of church authority. Concerning the international level, let us pray for those that are charged with overseeing this vast movement that crosses borders and spans continents. They have a heavy burden of providing a vision that blends together all the different aspects of leadership into an integral approach to reaching the world. At the top of every nation’s church organization stands a group of leaders that are carrying a similar responsibility. They must carefully oversee and assess whether or not we are successful in creating a climate of spiritual health in our respective nation’s churches. If it is not as it should be, they are the ones that must stand forth and make the changes necessary to correct it. And, of course, the pastor in each local church is just as important as those already mentioned. What more key player could there be in the spiritual growth of the Church? The local church shepherd is the one on the scene, caring for, equipping, and guiding the flock into greener pastures where the still waters lie. Finally, the Lord has called each and every saint to be a witness for Him. We are not idle spectators, watching others perform on the field of battle. We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. We can do all things. With God, it is possible to see the revival that we have talked about for so long. It’s high time to enter into the promise!

Chapter Five

INTRODUCTION TO REVIVAL PRINCIPLES

“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.” --1 Peter 5:1-3

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” --Acts 20:28

Both Peter and Paul expressed their deep desire that the elders of the church take proper care of that for which Jesus gave His own life. There is just nothing quite so precious in God’s sight as a healthy church. And according to His plan, there are strict boundaries of responsibility and authority that must be observed. These boundaries include both authority exercised by the elders of the Church, and the obedience and submission to such authority by all the membership. We read in Hebrews 13:17, *“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”* What a deep submission is spoken of here, but also what a tremendous responsibility. The elders are to stand guard and be vigilant regarding the souls of the saints. They will give an account of their leadership concerning whether or not it contributed to the salvation of those over which they were placed in spiritual authority. Such a responsibility requires a means by which we can hold ourselves accountable, long before God brings us before His judgment seat! We would do well to find a way by which we can know of a certainty that we are properly watching over the flock of God, which He purchased with such a dear price.

The six principles of revival that we will study in the following chapters can help in this “self-judgment.” Hopefully, they will help the reader and the church leader in taking an honest look at the present and past, and then to formulate a plan for the future. The goal, as we saw in the preceding chapters, is the spiritual health of each and every saint in every congregation. And, as was brought out in the last chapter, church leadership must make a regular assessment of this health. To ignore, or be willingly ignorant of this necessary function of church leadership will only contribute to a poorly equipped membership trapped in spiritual lethargy. Even worse, it might lead us to substitute the efforts of the flesh for the fruit of the Spirit in order to appear genuinely Christian, when in actual fact, we are simply descending further and further into hypocrisy. As Paul put it in Romans 8:8, *“So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”*

Another objective in presenting these six principles of revival is to help us in creating the environment that is conducive to spiritual health in the membership. Like the way that Jesus used four types of ground to symbolize the four kinds of humanity that hears

the Word in His parable of the sower and the seed, we can focus our efforts on providing good ground in our local and national churches in which the saints can be rooted, nourished, cared for, and in which they can spring up to spiritual fruitfulness. To fail in this nearly guarantees underdeveloped church membership and stunted spiritual growth. Even when certain saints strive for more, they will not have the proper climate in which to grow as they should. Desire on the part of church members is certainly something we long for, but they must be given the tools and the opportunities through which they may discover their own usefulness in God's building program.

Another area we will target in these six principles is realizing that these can and should be applied at every level of Christian leadership. No matter where we serve in church responsibility and authority, we can use these principles to gauge whether or not we are personally fulfilling our roles in furnishing those with whom we work that which is necessary for true church growth and development. We will see that there will remain a continual need for re-assessment as we work toward more and more revival and harvest. National leaders will be able to look at their churches, and by using these six principles, determine if they are on course, or deviating from the true goals. Hopefully, local church pastors will find these principles invaluable in helping to ensure that they are adhering to the pattern for reaching and discipling the saints outlined in the New Testament. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:33-11:1, *“Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”* Church leadership needs this kind of revelation and this kind of burden. It's a revelation in the sense that this is truly our mission: seeking the profit of many; and this is the burden: follow us as we follow Christ. In other words, senior church leaders must show that they are committed to the development of the next level under them.

We can also use these principles of revival to ensure that we are working in harmony with the four unchanging laws of leadership:

- Leaders produce leaders
- Spiritual leadership is not automatic
- Real leadership is based upon spiritual qualification and training, not on position
- Leadership in action = revival

Revival And Harvest

Up to this point in our study, we have used interchangeably the terms “revival” and “harvest.” In some places, the two have been presented at the same time. We will continue to use them thus. This treatise does not concern itself with proving that these two terms are not synonymous. It can rightly be argued that revival is for something that is dying or dead, and that harvest more accurately depicts the gathering of the mature crop. But these two are so intimately entwined in the Church environment that they can surely be considered together. Second to that is the fact that the word “revival” has been used for so long to describe not only the stirring up of the Church membership, but also

in describing the result of such stirring: more growth. The growth therefore that we seek is not just qualitative or quantitative, but both of these working together in perfect harmony. Matured saints are the ones that will give their all to help others toward spiritual perfection. And as that is reached, growth of numbers is certain to follow.

The New Testament Church is certainly a “revivalist” Church. The Bible is full of exhortations to strive for spiritual mastery and fulfillment, while at the same time replete with warnings concerning potential false doctrines and compromise. The ministry of the Church has always been and will continue to be two-fold: evangelism and edification. These two march together in perfect harmony. A built up assembly is one that becomes evangelistic. And an evangelistic church is one that will follow up by edifying the new converts to become evangelists as well. It is an ongoing cycle that cannot be ignored. The intent of following the six principles in this study will be to ensure that the cycle is presently operating within our respective domains of church labor. For example, the first of the six principles is that of *Vision*, while the sixth is called *A Growing Organizational Structure*. These two seem to be at opposite poles in many ways: one is purely spiritual, the other almost mundane. Yet one cannot be truly complete without the other. To launch a vision before the Church, but give no boundaries or limits of authority and control for it is to court disaster. As we will see in the study, we must certainly seek for great revival (harvest) and we must carefully contain it within godly parameters.

Checklists

Pilots everywhere are trained to use checklists for every phase of their flights. From the time they start in their student pilot days, the use of checklists is strictly enforced. In some cases during pilot license check rides, the examining officers (the duly authorized pilots responsible for giving final approval for a new pilot’s rating) have been known to fail the student if he or she fails to use an approved checklist during the appropriate phase of the flight. There are lists of responsibilities for actions prior to starting the engine, for taxiing, for takeoff, climb out, cruise, descent, and landing. The more complex the aircraft, the more detailed and lengthy will be the checklists involved. Flying is simply too important a subject (and in some cases too dangerous an activity) to neglect any particular and necessary configuration of the aircraft’s equipment or flight controls. In short, it’s just too critical to ignore. But isn’t that also true in regards to revival? Isn’t it just too important to ignore any one of the necessary ingredients that contribute together to produce a mature and significant harvest in the Church?

These six principles that will be looked at in detail can serve as separate checklists that pastors and other church leadership can use in the revival phase of the church’s flight. Under the subject of each of the principles is a list of things, that when complied with, will reassure us that we are ready for that particular phase of church growth and development. Using the checklist simply means going through the list and asking whether or not we have complied with that item. These items also serve to show us where any breakdown that may exist really lies. In other words, one of the goals of using these principles is to help church leaders be more efficient in applying sound biblical precepts. Hopefully, the reader will not take all of this to mean that there is some kind of

mechanical approach to a spiritual harvest! This is far from the truth and far from the intent of these chapters. After all, this is the Church, which as Ephesians 2:20 says, is "... *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*" However, anything that can help us to stay on track, stay focused on the priorities, and stay committed to the accomplishment of this great task is most certainly welcome and helpful. For example, let's consider the first principle, *Vision*. We can tell pastors that they must have vision and that they must cast this vision to the congregation. But that's easier to say than do. By using the seven points in the chapter on vision, however, a pastor should have a clearer idea of whether or not he is effective in transmitting the vision. The points in that lesson will also serve to indicate trouble spots that may exist. In other words, we simply hope that they will aid us in making a tough responsibility a little easier.

The Big Picture

During the explanation of these principles we will avoid getting bogged down in too many specifics, and we will try to stay concentrated on a comprehensive approach to experiencing revival. There are two main reasons for this. First of all, some specifics are simply too obvious to place in the list. For example, things like prayer will not be discussed in detail because it is assumed that we are praying, and that we recognize the need to pray at all times and for all things. We were born in prayer, and nothing is able to replace seeking God in humble supplication. The will of God is sought, found, and sealed in prayer. To mention it as a principle of revival, however, would miss the bigger picture. Where would we place prayer in the list anyway? Is it first? Is it in the middle? In reality, it belongs at the heart of every one of the six principles.

Secondly, sometimes the specific fits neatly inside one or more principles. In other words, the principle is just clearly larger than the specific. Spiritual worship is an example of this. It falls naturally under the principle of *A Balanced Ministry*. The principle here is bigger than the specific of worship. Worship is discussed in the principle as one of the many parts of a balanced ministry in a church. Another example would be that of teaching home bible studies. Someone might say that it is a principle of revival, but there is actually a principle that includes bible study that is larger than the specific. In our study, we will consider the importance of home bible study training in the principle called *Equipping The Saints*. What about preaching the gospel? Isn't that one of the main principles of a revival? After all, Paul wrote in Romans 1:21, "... *it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*" Therefore, someone might conclude that preaching should be included in the list. It certainly has its place in many things that we do, but to limit it to one place would again be to miss the bigger picture. Preaching will fall under principles like *Vision*, *Equipping*, *A Balanced Ministry*, and *The Best Use Of Gifts And Talents*. Once more, these principles are bigger than the specific of preaching. What do we preach? How is it presented, and by whom? When is it most effective? These and other points must be considered in terms of integrating the ministry of preaching into the immense subject of revival and harvest.

Passing It On

Another goal in the presentation of these six principles is that they will be passed on to others through teaching. More than just helping church leaders in their search for revival, these principles can be taught to the church on both the local and national levels. By doing this, several things are accomplished:

- First, we reveal the fact that there is, in fact, a plan for the harvest, and that we in leadership are committed to adhering to that plan. Also, by emphasizing that the principles are Bible-based ones, we attest to our dedication to remaining scriptural in all that we do. The trial and error method of church building may have worked for some, but in general, it leaves the members wondering if the leaders really know what they are doing.
- The principles help to define our responsibility, and consequently, the authority that goes with it. This helps the general membership to better understand the burden and zeal displayed by truly inspirational leaders. More than just having “fiery preachers,” the saints will realize that the fire exists for a specific purpose.
- By teaching these principles we instill confidence in the membership concerning the revival. We can state emphatically (and biblically) that revival is a present reality and that we will be part of it! It will help to prove that this kind of sound and scripture-based leadership can be trusted in taking the church in the right direction.
- By directing the majority of the believers toward the same goals, we promote true unity. This kind of unity is found when people are moving together in the same direction and working together toward the accomplishment of a common objective. This helps to establish a strong team spirit, one that benefits both the team and the players on the team.
- A clear presentation of these principles helps the church membership to see their potential parts in the overall plan. This in turn inspires individuals to strive for more and more consecration to the will of God working in them and through them. As church growth starts to be realized, members should be able to see that new and expanding opportunities are opening up for them in spiritual ministry.
- The principles, when taught and implemented in a church, show future church planters that the principles are more than just theoretical, they are viable. As these new leaders leave the home congregation to start new works, they will carry with them proven principles that will help them plant the new crop on good ground.
- Finally, by teaching these principles, we provide a framework of accountability for the leadership. We are stating what we will be responsible for overseeing, the boundaries of those responsibilities, and what we expect from the leaders that work with us in this great commission.

If It Changes, It Wasn't A Principle

It is always helpful to distinguish between a “principle” and the “application” of a principle. In fact, people are often confused when failing to note the difference. An example of this is the biblical tenet that we are “saved by faith.” That’s a principle. The application can change while the principle remains the same. There is little doubt that a man like Abraham was saved by God! Yet he was not baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. How was he saved? Abraham was very particular about expressing his faith. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 11:8, “*By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*” That’s the application: by faith he went out and looked for a God-built city. The application today of the Church’s faith is a bit different; at least it has a different look. The city we look for is a heavenly one. To get there, we must take clearly outlined steps of obedience and repentance. There’s just no other way for us in this age. Abraham was saved by the specific application of his faith, as we are saved today by a specific application of our faith. The principle has not changed, while the application has.

This is important as we begin to delve into a study on revival. What are the principles involved? Then, and only then, can we begin to make specific applications of these principles in our local churches and in our national organizations. The principles that we will study in the following six chapters are:

- Vision
- Equipping The Saints
- The Nucleus Concept
- The Best Use Of Gifts And Talents
- A Balanced Ministry
- A Growing Organizational Structure

We will concentrate on these comprehensive principles, knowing that the eventual application of them will be left to the responsibility of the respective church leaders involved. The applications may differ from nation to nation, region to region, and sometimes even church to church, but most likely the principle will remain valid.

Our prayer is simply that these principles find a place in the toolkit of the reader. Revival is the goal and whatever helps to get us there is what we need. As Paul said in Ephesians 5:17, “*Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*” Someone once said that wisdom means knowing what to do with knowledge. If that is so, let’s find the principles of true revival and use them in the best way possible, ensuring a greater harvest than ever before!

Chapter Six

PRINCIPLE 1: CASTING AND COMMUNICATING THE VISION

In our treatise on the Principles of Revival, we must begin with the subject of spiritual vision. While it should be an elementary part of what we do, too often the fact is that much of what is done in the name of church ministry may not be based on a real vision received from the Lord. A lot is said about the will of God and the part that it plays in our lives and ministries. Vision is very closely related to this. The Lord is the source of the vision that we as church leaders must have in order to carry out the will of God for our local churches and our regional and national works. This is, after all, His Church!

Jesus simply said that He would build His Church. That's the will of God, and it has been so since before the foundation of the world. We can see the types and shadows of this Church as early as the Book of Genesis, and we see it throughout the Book of the Revelation. To attempt, therefore, knowingly or unknowingly, to participate with God in the building of this Church without a proper vision is simply unacceptable. Besides not having a true vision, we will see in this chapter that it is possible to have a vision that is a wrong vision. We will examine in this first principle seven different aspects of having, casting, and truly communicating a real vision.

The Sacrifice Of Fools

“Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.”
--Ecclesiastes 5:1-3

What could this “sacrifice of fools” possibly be? Obviously, it must be something less than acceptable! Notice first of all that the one giving this sacrifice is at “the house of God.” This is a believer of some sort, someone who claims, at least, to be a follower of the Lord. This is someone who thinks that he is offering something that is acceptable and honorable, when in fact it is not that at all. But he *is* offering something. The “something” turns out to be a substitute sacrifice, something that is artificial in lieu of a genuine and acceptable sacrifice.

The passage also tells us, “...*they consider not that they do evil.*” They either don't know that what they are doing is wrong, or else they don't really care! In either case, it is merely a sacrifice of fools. Whether or not others in the house of God recognized it as such, before God it was seen for what it really was—a vain attempt at obedience.

Notice also that the entire passage is in the context of making a vow before God. The writer counsels us to be more ready to hear than to speak. In other words, we have an

obligation to find the will of God, not to impose our own way of thinking on Him! Like the so-called sacrifice made by Cain in Genesis 4, there are gifts, offerings, and service offered unto the Lord that were never defined nor expected by Him. They are simply substitutes for what He actually wanted from us. God is in Heaven we are told, meaning that His way of looking at things, His perspective is far superior to ours. And, it is said that dreams are rather ordinary in nature. They often come as a result of what occupied our thoughts during our daily affairs. There is a vast difference in carnally inspired dreams and the real vision that comes from the throne of God! We might conclude, therefore, **that those that offer the sacrifice of fools lack real vision.**

It was Solomon that wrote the verses above. This wisdom came from a man that had spent 7 years in building the Temple of God and *13 years in building his own house!* While a young and vain man he had made many mistakes. He had seen the error of his ways much later in life, and in this vein tried to pass on this sage advice concerning having the proper direction for one's life. How futile it is to try and produce something spiritual by the power of the flesh. And how dangerous it is to seek church growth without first adhering to the principle that all of what we do must be based upon a God-given vision. Let us consider seven things that will help us in finding and communicating this vision that is necessary for real revival and harvest today.

1) It Is Possible To Have The Wrong Vision

The ability to “see” will never be enough. What is it that we are seeing? It might be the wrong vision completely. Solomon went on to say in Ecclesiastes 11:4-5, *“He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.”* Sometimes when everything looks impossible, it is then that the Lord wants us to act. We need His direction and we are desperately in need of His way of seeing things. He knows the end from the beginning! After all, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. While we dedicate ourselves to the will of God in building the church and seeing revival, let us be first dedicated to the vision that is defined by the Lord. Look at the difference of “seeing” in the next passage from 2 Kings 6:15-17:

“And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! How shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see.”

The apostle Paul put it this way, *“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor?” (Romans 11:33-34)*

Another potential danger lies in not using what we have already received from the Lord, and instead, substituting our own vision for His. The fact is that we must either use the real thing, or lose it. Jesus said in Luke 8:18, *“Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.”* The word “seemeth” here is one that is also translated simply as *think* or *suppose*. Sometimes we think that we have some great gift of God, and we reflect on how anointed we are! We are often heard boasting about the “move of God” in our midst. Yet, are we part and parcel of what God is really doing? Are we joined together with Him in *His vision*? We can use what God has placed in us for His purpose, or we can lose even what we simply think we have. The choice is ours.

2) Real Vision Can Be Defined By The Scriptures

When we read Ephesians 1:15-23, we read the desire and prayer of the apostle Paul concerning the saints of the Ephesian Church. Paul reminds them of the hope of God’s calling for the Church, the rich glory of His inheritance that is in the saints, and the great power which worked in and through Jesus Christ and is now at work through the body. In other words, Paul is trying to communicate the vision that he has for the churches of Ephesus. Verse 18 opens with the words, *“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened...”* This is spiritual vision and it is what every local assembly and every national church needs! As we read about the power of God working through the Church in the Book of Acts or the churches to which the Epistles were written, we must be careful to realize that we are part of the same Church, moved by the same Spirit, and dedicated to the same task of revival and harvest. This helps to define our own vision for the mission ahead.

Another passage helpful in this is 2 Corinthians 4:1-7:

“Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”

In these verses Paul tells us what our source of vision is, and what it is not. He tells us that it starts with the revelation that we have a true ministry. Knowing this, we do not faint at adversity, but we persevere. It comes by way of commitment to the revelation of the truth to others, not by the hidden things of dishonesty, walking in craftiness, or in handling the Word of God deceitfully. Interestingly enough, the chapter concludes with Paul telling the Corinthians in verse 18, *“While we look not at the things which are seen,*

but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” Whatever we eventually claim as our vision must be God inspired and based upon scripture.

3) We Must Become Joined To The Vision

“Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he. A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer.”
-- *Proverbs 29:18-19*

Everyone seems to know the beginning of verse 18, but how many follow it up with the insight gained in verse 19? Here we find a “servant” (in Hebrew, *ebed*) that may say he is sorry when he fails to do what is commanded, but who never seems to genuinely change in his attitude and actions. He is simply a servant that is never really joined with his master in the same vision. He that keeps the law, however, is happy because he knows why he is doing what he is doing!

Perhaps this is why Jesus used the well-known words in John 15:15, *“Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”* There is a huge difference in the words “doulos” (servant) and “philos” (friend.) One tries to do what he is told. The other understands the “why” behind the commandment.

At some point, the vision that the Lord wants to give us for leading the revival must become *ours*. It gives us purpose and it gives us certain direction. It becomes a foundation on which we can build the work that we do in the Kingdom. It is our vision and it will encompass our goals, our hopes, our faith, and our dedication. It is a vision that is predicated upon truth, holiness, and the will of God for our individual lives. Paul put it this way in Philippians 2:13, *“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”*

Speaking of his own vision in Acts 20:22-24, Paul told the elders from Ephesus, *“And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”* Paul’s sincere desire to get to the great city of Rome would first take him back to Jerusalem where he would be arrested, tried, and convicted. But it would be through that condemnation that he would have the opportunity to appeal to Caesar and find his chance to go to Rome and preach the gospel. It would not be enough that someone might go in his place—this was Paul’s own vision and the will of God for his life. No wonder then that nothing else could move him from his steadfastness and ardent zeal concerning the work of the Lord. To some, Jerusalem meant bonds and afflictions for Paul. For him, it meant liberty and grace in greater and greater measure. He had heard the voice of his friend, Jesus, and he would gladly obey because he shared in the vision of the Master.

4) We Must Clearly Communicate The Vision

First of all, leaders are the ones responsible for casting the vision. Normally, vision comes from the top and is communicated downward. This is not always the case, however. Sometimes it is another person that is shown something new, something that may or may not add to the present vision. At this point, then, it is the senior leadership that must be responsible for what to do with what has been “received.” In other words, although it might not be the leader that initially receives more of the vision or a new direction in the vision, *it is always the leader that is responsible for the vision*. It will always be the leadership that is obligated to assess the vision received and to judge whether to reject it or to put it into practice.

It is also the leader that is first joined to the vision and then communicates it to those with whom he is working. In a local church it is the pastor that must be the caretaker of the vision, and his goal is to clearly communicate it to the congregation. On a national level, senior leaders must feel responsible for the vision being cast to regional and local leaders. These leaders need to ask themselves some pertinent questions concerning the vision: *How often is it cast? To whom is it being cast? Are they holding themselves accountable to the vision?* Let us look at these three:

How often is it being cast? This vision is more than just someone’s idea. It is not a simple mission statement. It is the direction in which the Lord wants to take us. It is about who we are, what we are going to do and how we are going to see it done. It is a clear delineation of how we are going to arrive at the destination. It is also a constant reminder to us that despite all of the difficulties and seemingly impossible impediments, we are indeed going to arrive by the will of God. It is a statement of why we are doing what we do and the scriptural reasons behind it. It is a source of identity for the body, whether a local church or a national organization. Therefore, it can hardly be cast too often. It helps to hear it and share it regularly so that we can better judge where we stand in relation to it. It must be by all means cast constantly.

To whom is it cast? This is important in the sense of realizing that not everyone will receive the vision that we are attempting to communicate. Therefore, we should not grow discouraged when certain church members do not become part of it. Others, however, are the key players in and around the vision. To these people who will be the nucleus upon which we build, it is extremely important that we properly cast the vision. Again, being joined to the vision will eventually be for more than just the senior leaders. It will become the local church’s identity, and the national organization’s common bond. Revival can certainly become a strong unifying factor in today’s church.

Are the leaders holding themselves accountable to the vision? They should feel tightly held by the vision and answer to it. They are responsible to make regular assessments as to whether or not they are leading the work according to the vision. This is yet another reason for “constant casting” of the vision. This point is very similar to what the Church was told in James 1:23-25, “*For if any be a hearer of the word, and not*

a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.” Let us continue to look at the vision that the Lord has given us for today’s revival Church!

5) The Vision Must Transition From “Mine” To “Ours”

This is a tremendously important step in a local church or a national organization. This speaks of the time when the membership begins to become part of the vision too. It is no longer just a “dream” expressed by the pastor or the national or regional leadership. It now becomes a global vision as well. Now the members can start to respond to the prompting of the Spirit even more completely because they know where He is taking the Church. When this begins to take place, the members stop asking, “What is the vision?” and start declaring, “This is our vision!” They have seen it, they believe it, and they become part of it.

If this does not take place, there are most likely two possible reasons. Firstly, it could be the case of a good leader trying to cast the vision to people that simply will not receive it. In other words, he is trying to work with the wrong people! Secondly, it is possible that good people find themselves under the authority of a leader who simply does not have the vision at all, and therefore is unable to communicate it to anyone. Let us strive to ensure that neither is the case in our assemblies. We need men and women of spiritual vision.

6) We Must Maintain The Vision

The vision is worth holding onto! And, sometimes, it just won’t be an easy thing to do. But we are responsible as senior leaders to maintain the vision and the spiritual momentum that it generates. The vision will grow and expand and we must be ready to move with it. We must also be discerning as to potential compromises concerning the vision for our work with the Lord. Human and demonic influences will try and seduce us with subtle yet deceiving tactics. We must be watchmen and stand guard over the truth and the vision that springs from it. It is time for apostolic revival and nothing should impair the Church from seeing it become a reality on the local and national level.

Another aspect of maintaining is in regards to knowing where to go based upon where we are now. *To know how to continue to go means to know where we have already traveled.* And this means making an honest assessment of our real successes and a sincere look at our failures. It certainly also demands a comparison between where we are and where we should be according to the vision. The difference between **where we are now** and **where we should be** presents us with two essential needs:

- The need for a real repentance. The noun for repentance is “metanoia,” meaning “an afterthought.” The verb is equally clear, using “metanoeo,” meaning, “to

perceive afterwards.” We should be ready to admit that we are not where we should be, and be ready for the changes necessary to get us there. This is part of maintaining the proper vision.

- The need to agree (according to the vision) that the difference noted between where we are and where we should be represents that which is waiting to be fulfilled by real ministry. This we have already seen in Ephesians 1. In other words, now we should be able to see where we need to go and how once more to get there. There is a principle that should be studied here. Once we have identified the need, we can formulate a ministry to meet that need. Knowing what kind of ministry is necessary gives a picture of what kind of leadership will be required for that ministry, and this, in turn, tells us what kind of training will be needed for those respective leaders.

7) We Must Ensure That The Vision Is Being Received

The last aspect to look at in this first principle of revival is in regards to whether or not the vision is getting to the “target.” The vision, after all, is not just for the leadership, it is for the church as a whole. Every congregation should share in the vision, and every member should in turn join with the vision. As said before, not everyone will actually be willing or ready to receive, but our goal is to cast the vision so abundantly that anyone could become part of it. There is an effective way of knowing whether or not this is happening. At any stage in the six revival principles, we can use the principle that follows it to make this determination. In other words, to know whether or not the vision is indeed being cast and received we can look at the next principle in the chain, “Equipping the Saints.” As the membership begins to see the necessity of being equipped for the work of their ministry and starts to receive the tools given them, then we can feel assured that we are effectively broadcasting the vision to the local or national church.

Another way of knowing that the vision is being properly communicated and received is in seeing whether or not those that have already received it are passing it on to others. This is ultimately what we will be looking for to happen. This signals that the church membership is really getting a good hold on what the Lord is trying to communicate through the leadership.

A final way of determining that the vision cast is hitting the target is seen when those other than leaders begin to share their own experiences in the vision. Some will testify how the Lord is using them according to the vision, and others may begin to add to the vision through their own talents, ministries, and spiritual insight.

Burden, Vision, And Reality

Perhaps a good way of summing up this chapter on the necessity of a God-given vision is in understanding the three terms above. Someone asked recently concerning the difference between burden and reality. Are they the same? There is little doubt that a

real vision starts with a real burden. People really must care before they can become committed to a vision. In fact, without a strong burden from the Lord for the revival and harvest that He intends to have, few would ever press further to have the genuine vision necessary for its realization.

Perhaps the three words burden, vision, and reality speak of a process that carries us through to the fulfillment of the will of God in our work and in our ministries. With a burden we find a God-given vision for revival. With that perspective of who we are and a revelation of what we are called and enabled to do, we can move on in the Spirit to the actual accomplishment of God's objective—the reality of building His Church!

Sadly, many good men and women have been left at the point of burden without ever arriving at the reality. The missing link is a real vision that bridges this gap. Having a strong desire to “do” is a good beginning, but knowing the “why” and the “how” of seeing it done is the catalyst in actually bringing it all to reality. Whether we are pastors of local churches, or regional or national leaders, let us all strive to ensure that those with whom we work can share in a God-given vision for this Great Commission. With that kind of vision, and with a holy burden that is never extinguished, we will see that Jesus really does want to do *“exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” Ephesians 3:20*

Chapter Seven

PRINCIPLE 2: EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

There can be no doubt at all that the key to sustainable church growth is equipping the membership in evangelism principles. This key is the one particular thing that guarantees sustained growth, no matter the conditions in which it operates. When this key is discovered and then properly used, nothing can hinder the growth of the Church. Jesus, after all, said, “Upon this rock, I will build my church.”

Sometimes, however, the realization of the need to be constantly and thoroughly equipping the saints for the work of true ministry is lost on the sea of church programs and religious business. If, for example, we discover that equipping is not being carried out on an efficient basis, what are we really doing instead? We can sing, worship, pray, lead services, and give in the various offerings of the church assembly, but if the saints are not carrying out their mandate to go and evangelize because we are not equipping them for service in the Kingdom, it’s all for nearly nothing!

Paul said it clearly in Ephesians 4:11-12, “*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*” In other words, God provides the kind of senior leadership that is necessary in any particular context, with a view to the full outfitting of the church membership for the roles that they will play in His revival. What we have often referred to as “the ministry” is nothing more than the old concept of the “clergy” in comparison to the “laity.” Neither of these is scriptural, however. Yes, it is true that there are the offices of pastor, apostle, etc., but it is also true that these leaders will serve in the capacity of equipping church members for their personal ministries, wherein lies the key to great church growth for which we seek! It is not at all true, however, that those occupying such offices are the only ones “in ministry.” The work of the real ministry is the work of the general church membership as they reach out and win souls into the Kingdom of God.

Let us take a serious look at the mathematics of church growth for an instant. If only one-fourth of church members were active in personal ministry and would add one soul to the church each year (not an unrealistic expectation at all) the church would double in only three years! If half of the saints were doing this, we would see the church (whether locally, regionally, or nationally) grow to nearly seven and a half times its present size after only 5 years. To double in six years only requires the participation of one out of every eight of the members. Looking at the other side of this reality is a sad question: if we are not seeing this kind of church growth now, what are we really doing? Perhaps a better question would be, “What are we failing to do?” The answer is a simple one: we are failing to equip the saints for the work of the ministry!

Do We Know What Jesus Has Done To Us?

Shortly before His arrest and terrible crucifixion, Jesus assembled His disciples together (even Judas Iscariot was there) and the Master girded Himself with a towel, bent

low and washed the feet of each one of them. Upon finishing, Jesus asked them a poignant question, “*Know ye what I have done to you?*” (*John 13:12*) Surely they had seen the humility displayed by the Kings of kings, but also surely, they had not fully comprehended what He had done. It would be much later, and after a powerful infusion of His Spirit that they would come to know the depth of commitment and the humility necessary to truly be “ministers.”

What about today? People are receiving the Holy Ghost all around the globe now. We are happy to make our reports of hundreds or thousands that have been filled with this precious gift of God. But do they really know what He has done to them? Do they understand why He has done it?

According to Paul the apostle, we have received the Spirit of adoption, by which we can declare God to be our Father (Romans 8:15.) He also tells us in Ephesians 1:13 that we are “sealed” by the Holy Spirit. It stands as a seal of our faith, and therefore testifies that we have become partakers of His divine nature and righteousness. But there is more to it than that. We must not forget the simple words of the Saviour when He told His disciples to go to Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father. He said it this way, “*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses...*” (*Acts 1:8*) We shall receive, and we shall be witnesses. It is not even optional here. Again, **we shall receive and we shall be witnesses**; one is the result of the other.

Paul told the Romans that he was a debtor to the Greeks and to the barbarians. Why? God had reached down and saved him, and now the apostle felt the intense desire to share the experience with others. He must have felt that, if he could be saved, anyone could be reached. Jude put it like this; “*Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference* (most versions translate this as “have compassion on those that waver”): *And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.*” (*Verses 21-23*) We can certainly hate the sin of the world, but the Spirit that lives in us loves the sinners in the world! One reason that we exist is to save others from the fire.

This chapter and the second principle of revival is concerned with seven aspects of equipping. They speak of the necessity of equipping the saints for the work of *their ministry*, and they also serve as a kind of checklist, helping senior church leadership to know whether or not equipping is rightly taking place.

Whether the context is a local assembly or a national or regional work, the principle of equipping remains true. At whatever level of leadership we find ourselves, we should feel the desire and burden to equip those we serve. Every member, and certainly every leader, should be trying to help someone under them to rise to a higher level of ministry. In this chapter we will especially focus on the equipping of the saints that should be taking place in the local church. Members should be equipped in evangelism principles with regards to the following seven aspects:

➤ **The Mandate**

There is, of course, a scriptural foundation for this equipping. We are told to go everywhere and teach everyone (Mark 16:15). While it is a well known and often preached principle, if left alone, it can lead to frustrated believers. Members of the body of Christ that are not given the tools to evangelize, neither are taught in the use of those tools, will only become frustrated when they hear preaching about reaching the lost but don't know how to do it. In Luke's account of the Great Commission, in Luke 24:45-49, Jesus begins the command by opening their understanding, so that they might understand the scriptures. It was necessary for the first disciples, and remains necessary for disciples today.

For many church members, it seems that witnessing is an optional kind of thing, for those that are "super spiritual" perhaps. Yet, scripturally, it's a different story. Therefore, equipping must start with the understanding of the biblical viewpoint on the Holy Spirit baptism. It really is a life-changing power! It can move us from the walled-in and selfish attitude we held while still carnal, to one of love and compassion stemming from a loving Saviour abiding in us. Yes, we are mandated to go and reach the world, but there is a good and eternal reason for this commission. This leads us to the second part of equipping.

➤ **The Motive**

The motive behind all of this is really the "why" of personal ministry. We do what we do because we care! The lunatic of Mark 5 experienced a miraculous deliverance at the hands of Jesus. His love, thankfulness, and appreciation for Jesus moved him to ask if he could continue with the Lord in His travels. Jesus' answer in Mark 5:19 serves as a reminder that we should share our experiences with those around us. *"Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."* Receiving the Holy Spirit means receiving the love and compassion of Jesus Christ! We should be moved with this compassion. The desire to tell others should become an automatic part of the Holy Ghost experience. If it is not there, something deep is lacking within the life of the believer.

Blaspheming the Holy Ghost is an often-debated subject of theology. What it really means has been misconstrued through the ages. The passage in Matthew 12, however, sheds light on this. To speak against the Son of man is one thing. To live as though the Holy Ghost has no direct influence on one's life, however, is quite another! Perhaps "speaking against the Holy Ghost" is not something we say after all. Perhaps it really is in the way that we live our lives. Verse 33 makes it even more clear, *"Either make the tree good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit."* In other words, claiming that we are "filled" with the Holy Ghost, yet doing virtually nothing because of this infilling, is nothing less than gross hypocrisy! We must either make the tree good, allowing the Lord to have His way in our lives, or else we should simply admit that the tree is corrupt. His Spirit should be the source of power

behind all that we do in the Kingdom. To deny this power is to deny the presence of the Holy Ghost, thereby blaspheming everything that should be held sacred.

Jesus told His disciples in John 13:34, “*A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*” Jesus, God in the flesh, the author of all of the commandments of the Old Testament, tells His disciples about a “new commandment.” His love should be active in us and through us to reach out to others. It speaks about a real surrender to the will of God! That is the source of our personal ministry and the motive behind it.

In John 14:12, we read the well known passage, “*He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*” This simply means that after Jesus ascended into heaven, the Church would be endowed with a divine power—Jesus’ own power—the power of His Spirit in us and working through us! And the works that we do will actually be His own works as He acts through His Church, His body on the earth.

➤ **The Means**

While motive is the “why” of personal ministry, the next two parts, means and method, serve as the “how” of personal ministry. While we must start with the Mandate and Motive for personal evangelism in a local assembly, we must move on to the Means. The means refers to the fact that personal ministry is a real possibility in the lives of every believer. In other words, we have the means by which equipping and ministry can take place. It should be a reality in every believer’s life, and in every local church, but too often, it is relegated to a certain few that seem to carry the entire load of evangelism on their shoulders. *Equipping every member should become the goal of every senior church leader.* The reality, however, must not be ignored. Thinking that each saint in a local church will happily and willingly take the tools that we are using in equipping and use them for the glory of God can be a disappointing dream if not tempered by the realization that not everyone will participate in nor be dedicated to the will of God. We should not become frustrated or diverted from the true task, however. While it is true that not every member will receive the equipment, we should still continue to strive toward equipping everyone. Some will receive what we have to offer, and they will become instrumental in the future growth of the Church. That is a fact! We will focus more on that principle in the next chapter, The Nucleus.

The *means* of personal evangelism has to start with it being promoted by those in authority. *It must be promoted until it becomes a reality.* In John 4:35, Jesus exhorts the disciples to look at the fields as being already ready for harvest. There is really nothing to wait for; the harvest is ripe and ready for the sickle. This has to become part of our thinking, however. While it is imperative that we know about the *mandate*, and it is certain that we must have the right *motive* for participating in it, we must also realize that **the time for the harvest is now**. The means by which we can apply ourselves to the task are already available to us. Pastors should clearly present the fact that the tools of revival and harvest are available to every believer, and that the training in the use of these tools is

there, too. Teaching, training, and the support necessary in personal evangelism should be clearly delineated. In other words, if we see the mandate, and we feel the burden, we should be able to see that with the help of the local church, we can personally participate in this great and worthy task.

Jesus promised in John 15:4-5, *“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”* What a great and simple truth is revealed there. Abiding in Him means that we will be fruitful! The means of harvest speaks of the ways by which pastors and other leaders can help saints to more deeply abide in the True Vine than ever before. It is God’s will that we bring forth much fruit, and that this fruit remain. *In fact, everything that we do in the local church should have a direct bearing on this principle. Everything that we say, preach, or teach should somehow be connected to the objective of church members becoming more strongly tied to the Lord.* This will, after all, bring revival and true apostolic harvest. Anything that does not contribute toward this goal should be become suspect in our eyes, and we should determine its overall use to the cause. Some programs might even have to be discarded once they are seen as truly unfruitful.

➤ **The Method**

This fourth aspect should not be made out to be more complicated than it is really is. Personal evangelism simply refers to one person ministering to another. This may actually be a married couple in the Church or a family reaching out to another couple or family. But it should not be thought of as one leader ministering to a group. That is another part of evangelism and edification. In this lesson we are looking at the key of equipping every individual member of the body to be effective in his or her personal responsibility of evangelism. Therefore, the main method will continue to be that of effectively witnessing and teaching home bible studies. It should be our goal that all members be well trained in this method.

Firstly, saints should be encouraged to actively share their personal testimony. It always helps a new convert to have a more experienced member helping him or her in this initial phase of what we call witnessing to others. Church members should also be helped to understand the potential impact of sharing their spiritual experiences. Often, people have much more to share than they realize! After the initial contacts and friendships are made, and testimonies shared, the next step should be what we read about in Acts 2:46, *“...breaking bread from house to house.”*

Home bible studies should be made easily available and easy to teach. The studies should be offered in different formats, from very simple and easy to be taught by everyone, to more complex and in-depth studies. Some studies should be designed to be quick, not demanding much time from the new contact. Others should be available that are designed to span several weeks in length. A major part of equipping means putting appropriate and useful tools in the hands of the church membership. Having a bible study

in hand and knowing how to teach someone the study goes a long way in helping a *saint* to become a *minister*.

No member should be intimidated by the “difficulty” of such a bible study. It is nothing more, really, than a method by which one can share his testimony through an exposition of the scriptures. In other words, it is simply saying that what we have experienced has a scriptural basis. Such a study can be as simple as a list of verses kept in the believer’s bible, or, it could be a well-written and comprehensive study printed and reproduced. Whatever its form, the bible study should be used as a method by every believer, not just a few. From the onset in Acts 2, this Church found that personal evangelism meant going everywhere and telling everybody. While we continue to encourage new converts to grow in their worship and in their personal prayer life, we must not neglect to equip them in the area of personal evangelism through the teaching of the Word of God to others.

Another aspect of the method deals with the necessary record keeping and follow-up that are necessary in true apostolic accountability. Who is teaching? Who has been “qualified” (by training) to teach? What are the results of the studies? Which studies have been effective? What can be done to follow up the studies to bring the new contacts to their next step in Christian living? Careful analysis of these and other subjects is of paramount importance to every pastor and leader in the local church. This, after all, is the key that we are talking about in this lesson. We must remember that we are chosen by Jesus to be fruitful, *and that it is His will that our fruit remain*. Continuous follow-up regarding the spiritual growth of new contacts and new converts is imperative in a local assembly.

While Luke 24’s account of the Great Commission tells us to preach repentance and remission of sins in His name, and Mark 16’s version tells to go everywhere and preach the gospel, Jesus uses a special word in Matthew 28’s account. In verse 19, Jesus says, “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...*” The word “teach” there is the Greek word “*matheteuo*,” meaning *to make disciples*. In other words, there is a formula here for building the Church: because of the power of the Lord working through us, we are to go and disciple others, bringing them to the spiritual maturity necessary to be fruitful in personal evangelism themselves.

➤ **The Ministry**

Paul said in Ephesians 4:16, “*From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*” There is the ministry in one verse! Notice the key words there: **the whole body-every joint-every part-maketh increase**. When each part is trained and qualified to do its share, there is nothing to stop the increase of the body! Personal evangelism by the saints is not just a ministry in a local church. It is *the ministry of the local church!* Helping souls to find the Lord and then inspiring and nurturing them to grow in His grace is what the Church has been called to do. And that is exactly why equipping is one of the

principles of revival. Senior leaders, the ones charged with doing the equipping, must never foster the sentiment that evangelism is less than what it really is. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers exist to fully furnish the saints with what is necessary to grow the Body of Christ on the earth. Once again, we do not want to simply preach and teach the saints the necessity of this kind of ministry; we are aiming to equip them properly for the task. Rather than being frustrated with their seeming inability to accomplish the greatest task of all, they can happily become ministers of the new testament of Jesus Christ.

Saints should be shown that not only would their ministry benefit new converts, but that they, too, will be blessed by this increase in the body. As they teach and minister, they will feel spiritually fulfilled as never before. They will be fulfilled as they grow in proportion to the way in which they participate with God in this great harvest. Just as water from a well is drawn out and quickly replaced by new water from deep within the earth, so it is with every member that gives out of the Spirit. He will in turn be given more! This is the ministry of the Church and it must be viewed as such. All of the singing, the preaching, and the visits to the sick and oppressed have their place in all of this, but the real ministry is each believer doing his or her share in harvesting, in real personal evangelism.

The Apostle Peter put it simply in his first epistle, chapter 4, verse 10: *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”* Church leaders are responsible for helping the saints to “receive the gift” and also in ensuring that they are able to “minister the same one to another.” The membership should see this kind of personal evangelism as an integral part of local church ministry. Once again, they should see the importance of helping people to take the next step.

This is also an **ongoing ministry**—it should never stop. The principle of personal ministry never changes. It is also an **irreplaceable ministry**. In other words, there is nothing to substitute for it. If we don’t participate, who will? It should, lastly, be viewed as a guaranteed **successful ministry**. It works. It always has, and it always will!

➤ **The Multiplication**

Another aspect concerning equipping for personal evangelism in the local church is that it multiplies the local assembly. And the sooner that senior leaders begin equipping saints, the sooner they begin to see that multiplication takes place. Too often it seems, church members feel as though they are the last that will be saved. In actual fact, the Bible tells us that each one is saved as part of an overall plan to win others. Jesus always intended that there be a multiplication of ministry taking place at every level of Christian leadership. Those that we equip should become equippers too. Paul wrote about this in 1 Timothy 1:15-16, *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”* Equipping,

therefore, is a two-edged sword. We must first of all receive by the grace of God, and then by faith put that which we have received into action. Every Christian should come to the realization that he is one link in a long chain of saving grace toward the lost world.

We must not become satisfied with anything less than growth in quality and in quantity. Quality should precede quantity if the growth is to be sustainable. In fact, there is only real quantity when there is first real quality. As we have already seen from Jesus' teaching in John 15, to be in the vine and nourished by the Lord means being fruitful. And, without Him, that is, outside of the vine, we are unable to produce true fruit. The "work of the ministry" is the work of personal evangelism, and it is to be performed by every saint after being equipped in the local church. Church leaders are first of all to be equippers!

➤ **The Mentality**

Finally, personal evangelism should and will become a mentality of a growing and vibrant local assembly. It becomes part of who we are, what we think, what we do, and it defines our active participation with the Lord in His harvest. The local assembly, when filled by "personal evangelists," adopts and maintains an attitude of personal responsibility in the Great Commission. It becomes a happy place where believers are fulfilled, where they are part of something that really makes a difference in the community around them.

Pastors should ask themselves concerning their local assemblies, "Is my church really involved in God's program, or are we simply doing what other churches are doing?" We must not blindly adopt methods and programs that others seem to find useful or acceptable. What we do should be based upon the principle of equipping the saints for the work of ministering. Churches and church membership, whether on a national, regional or local level need to know without a doubt that they are part of a spiritual movement that will help them to become what God has always wanted them to become.

Few can argue the fact that there is a definite kind of spiritual "atmosphere" in a revival-minded church. The excitement generated by new souls being added regularly contributes to the level of faith. There is a certain expectation for something special in every meeting. Every local (or even national) church acquires its own kind of personality after a while. It may be like the one just described: vibrant, alive, and full of anticipation for great moves of the Spirit. Or, it may be just the opposite: one where little is expected because little has been experienced in the past! Church leaders have to take the responsibility for this. Some saints barely make it to every meeting, almost dreading the outcome of the services, and participating only because they feel that it is somehow mandatory to be present in order to be saved! Other members of revival assemblies come with high hopes and abundant faith, expecting great things from a great God! Both national leadership and local church leadership would do well to ask themselves, "What is the personality of this organization?" By equipping the saints for useful service, we begin to set the stage for a very positive church mentality.

Simpler Than We Think

While it may be true that we have experienced the “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” perhaps we have not yet fully realized what Jesus has done to us. The birth of the Spirit is a life changing experience. It is nothing short, in fact, of a new life completely. The Spirit that moved Jesus to give His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28) is the same Spirit that has filled us. We are not here to simply “go to church.” We are the Church! We are the saints that should be equipped and then released into the already ripe harvest field. Do we really know yet what Jesus has done to us?

The objective in breaking down the principle of “Equipping the Saints” into the above parts is to help church leaders in making a proper analysis of the present situation and then to see how and where future modifications should be made. We can ask ourselves a question concerning each of the seven aspects concerning those with whom we are charged to equip:

- 1) The Mandate – Do they see it?
- 2) The Motive – Have they really felt it?
- 3) The Means – Do they realize that it is possible?
- 4) The Method – Do they know how?
- 5) The Ministry – Do they understand it?
- 6) The Multiplication – Are they part of it?
- 7) The Mentality – Have they received it?

There is no substitute for real revival, and there is no substitute for real personal evangelism principles, the principles that ensure that revival and harvest take place! Let us remember the words of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:5-6, “*Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.*” We need mature saints that plant, water, cultivate, and harvest. And we need leaders that can equip these laborers. Notice again that Paul said that he and Apollos were given to every man. They were chosen, they were equipped, and they were sent. The result was great growth. Perhaps real revival is simpler than we think. After all, Paul said, “God gave the increase.” Let us do all we can to equip others and then see what the Lord will do.

Chapter Eight

THE NUCLEUS CONCEPT

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.” --2 Timothy 2:19-20

In this great house on the earth, the Church of the living God, there will always be two kinds of vessels. There will be those that are like gold and silver plates and utensils, honoring the Owner of the house and bringing Him glory by fulfilling their high calling. And, unfortunately, there will be those vessels made of only earth and of wood; common and ignoble parts of a house that simply do not reflect God’s glory. In other words, though Jesus told us in Matthew 5:16, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,”* the sad reality is that not every vessel in the house will “so shine.” If we permit ourselves to extend the metaphor that Paul used, we could say that repeated attempts to polish the earthen vessel might lead to its being broken! The happy reality, however, is that the gold and silver vessels do exist—it’s simply a matter of finding them and using them.

That is the main thrust in following this particular principle of revival. There is a nucleus in the Church and we must find it, develop it, and use it according to the will of God. Webster’s New World Dictionary defines “nucleus” as:

1) a thing or part forming the center around which other things or parts are grouped or collected; core; 2) anything serving as a center of growth or development.

This is what we should look for in the local church or in the body of leaders of a national organization, knowing that upon them, we can work with the Lord in building His Church. These are key people that will not compromise, but will stand strong with pastors and other leaders in the faith, and who will walk together in unity, striving for the common goal of revival and church growth.

The enemy, of course, will try his best to undermine this principle by diluting the faith of its adherents. The temptation to compromise is an ugly subject in the Church. It seems, however, to be continually around us, and therefore needs to be dealt with on a regular basis.

Jesus warned His disciples of this in Mark 8:15 when He said, *“Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.”* This warning came on the heels of the second miraculous feeding of the multitude. Jesus had used just a few fish and a little bit of bread and thousands had dined well. The disciples failed to understand the warning, however. They may have thought that Jesus was telling them not to eat bread that had been prepared for the Pharisees (the super religious outwardly yet dead inwardly) or for King Herod (a man of such high rank, yet abusing his authority to carry out his own evil acts.) These two kinds of people actually represented two of the things

that can compromise and/or corrupt believers: hypocrisy and abuse of position. And although the disciples failed to get the spiritual application of the warning, we must be certain we understand it.

The nucleus of a local church is a powerful thing: it works in harmony with its pastor, shares in the same vision, and becomes equipped for real personal ministry that will certainly grow the church. But allowing hypocrites and position seekers to move into places of authority is a gross error committed by too many pastors and leaders. It can quickly tarnish the silver, or worse, change it to wood and earth. What should have been glorious to God then becomes common and ordinary, not the materials on which to base a real revival! The way to avoid this is to carefully decide who is with the leadership in the vision, who is receiving the equipping that is provided, and who is ready for real responsibility. Then and only then can we appoint these people (those in the nucleus) to positions of authority in the plan we have set for the expansion of church ministries.

R—I—B

There are three steps here that are important to remember concerning this “core” of believers. We should:

- **R** Realize there is a nucleus
- **I** Identify this nucleus
- **B** Build on this nucleus

Realizing there is such a nucleus applies to every level of church leadership. This is because there is always a group of believers that have received the cast vision, and who are preparing to move along with it. Others wait and watch. In fact, there are almost always three kinds of people in every group: *those that are moving with the leaders; those that will never move with the leaders; and those that are watching to see if it's a good idea to move with the leaders.* In a national church context, there are pastors that clearly appreciate the leadership given to them and are always ready (or at least, most always ready) to stand with the leaders and share in the common task described. Other pastors never seem to really “get on board the ship.” The same applies to the membership of a local congregation. Some saints quickly rise to the challenge and excel. Others wait and see what their friends will do. And there will also be those that just never become what God wants them to be.

These are not evil people at all; they simply don't share the vision or receive the equipping. Remember the point that each principle of revival is in a specific order and must follow the preceding one? After clearly communicating the vision and then attempting to equip all of the saints for their ministry, the nucleus will begin to emerge. Like cream rising to the top of fresh milk, the nucleus will gradually appear. If no core group begins to be seen, we must continue in principles one and two until it does! If no one is interested in taking the equipment provided for them, perhaps we should look for new candidates. Or, perhaps we are trying to equip them with tools that are inappropriate for the job. In any case, according to the list of principles, the nucleus people are the

ones in the vision, equipped (or becoming equipped,) and are readying themselves for being useful in ministry in the church.

Another point to remember is that the nucleus is not always the majority. Any pastor, for example, would be happier to know that he has fifty spiritually solid members that are equipped for personal ministry, rather than five hundred lukewarm and ineffective members. The church of five hundred has little hope of remaining intact, let alone of experiencing revival! The church of fifty in the nucleus, however, can become a great tool in the hand of the Lord. From the nucleus will come the leaders of new ministries formulated to serve the needs of a growing church body. Therefore, we must not only realize that the nucleus is a reality; we must be able to identify it.

We Have To Have Criteria

Senior church leadership must have something that they can use in the determination of who is in fact with them in the nucleus. We have already seen that we can follow the first two principles of casting the vision and equipping the saints to see who becomes part of those principles. But we really need a list of criteria that are more specific. There are lots of passages in the Scriptures that describe the good solid character of a true believer. Those can be used. Or, pastors and other leaders can develop their own lists from experience in leading others. Lists should be modified from time to time until we arrive at one that truly serves its purpose in identifying the nucleus. In this chapter we will look at four points that might help to judge whether someone is really in the nucleus or not. These are four things that clearly point to a man or woman that is qualified for ministry. Also, each of the points speaks of the person's relationship with four necessary things.

1) ***A person in the nucleus is spiritual. This speaks of his relationship with God.***

This is someone who:

- **Has a character that is devoted to “Kingdom principles.”** This means that he is led by the Spirit and is sensitive to the Spirit. He seeks to understand these kingdom principles and apply them to his life. He is devoted to finding the will of God for his life, and then seeing that it becomes a reality. This is someone who will search the scriptures and who will, like is said in 2 Peter 3:18, *“Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”*
- **Walks by faith.** In other words, he makes sound decisions based on the Word of the Lord. Doubts will arise from time to time in his life, but this is a person that will overcome doubt by the certainty of God's plan for his life. John said it this way in 1 John 5:4, *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”*
- **Sees the goal ahead.** Again, this is someone who has received the vision that has been cast, and is willing and desirous to work toward the objectives according to that vision. This quality could not be described more aptly than Paul's exhortation in Philippians 3:13-14,

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

- **Receives a true anointing.** Acts 1:8 is so often quoted and preached that it has become almost commonplace. But it still bears the deep truth that we should first become empowered, and then we should be the witnesses as ordained by God. There’s just no substitute for the power and anointing of the Holy Ghost. Revival work is a spiritual one, and therefore demands a spiritual strength. Jesus spoke to Paul with these words recorded in 2 Corinthians 12:9, *“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”*
- **Is courageous in the cause.** Scripturally, there are two things that defeat fear: faith and love. The perfect illustration for this is the occasion when Jesus and His disciples had to cross the Sea of Galilee in Matthew 8. There are two important elements at work here: first, they were simply obeying the Word of the Lord to cross; second, they were with the Lord in the boat. Though the storm that came up that day was terribly frightening, these two things should have defeated their fear. Romans 10:17 states, *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* They surely had heard the Word of God that day! Jesus had said, “let’s cross over.” And as we read in 1 John 4:18, *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”* The word “perfect” there does not imply without fault, but rather “complete.” These disciples were in a boat together with Jesus. What could have happened? Could the storm sink the God of all power? Our complete love means riding in the boat next to Him. Where He goes, we must go. This kind of love and devotion will keep fear at bay. No wonder then that Jesus asked them in verse 26 after calming the wind and the sea, *“Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?”* Although God will bring the revival, the battles that we must share in order to see it are not always easy to wage. The nucleus person is one who is brave enough to stay with the Lord in the midst of the struggle.

2) ***A person in the nucleus has integrity. This speaks of his relationship with himself.*** This is someone who:

- **Is honest in all things at all times.** He is no hypocrite, but to the contrary is someone who is on guard for the insidious temptation to compromise his convictions. He is not out to simply look good to others, but is concerned with the inner man first, knowing the outer man will follow. The problem with the hypocritical Pharisees of Jesus’ day was simply as described in John 12:43, *“For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”* It cannot be so in the nucleus of the Church.

- **Considers the possible results of an action before acting.** This is the meaning of Ephesians 5:15, “*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.*” The context of this verse is that of being genuine, not acting as if we are one thing while in reality we are another. As Paul said in Romans 14:16, “*Let not then your good be evil spoken of.*” Not everything we may be allowed to do is always the best thing to do at any one time. Some actions may present unwanted ramifications afterwards. Nucleus people are aware of this and walk with their eyes wide open.
- **Is submitted in truth, obedience, and holiness.** This is a person for which ordinances of the church are not a problem. He is submitted to them because he is first of all submitted to the Lord Jesus. In Mark 7:6 Jesus rebukes the Pharisees by declaring, “*Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.*” There’s the real root of most of our struggles with hypocrisy. We try to show that we are submitted to God by our outward actions while our hearts remain cold, calloused, and independent. It just doesn’t work like that in the Kingdom of God! Candidates for being included in the church’s nucleus are those that have first humbled themselves before the Lord, thereby creating the attitude by which they may be led by God’s Spirit.

3) ***A person in the nucleus is compassionate. This speaks of his relationship with others.*** This is someone who:

- **Is moved by the needs of others.** The Holy Spirit is a compassionate spirit, and if we are truly filled, we will manifest this caring attitude toward others. We are told in 1 John 2:9-11, “*He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.*” And Paul made it plain and simple in 1 Corinthians 13:13, “*And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*” It seems like many saints are attracted to the powerful move of the Spirit of God and the signs and miracles that He gives. But the greatest attribute of all has always been, and will continue to be, love.
- **Esteems others better than himself.** This of course is taken from Philippians 2:3. The context is the humility displayed by Jesus the Almighty, Who made Himself in the likeness of men. He condescended to save us. How can we refuse to be abased if it would mean the exaltation of our brother? In verse 4, Paul goes on to say, “*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*” We are, after all, a body, in which every member is

vitaly important, and in which each part serves to edify the rest of the body.

- **Bears the burdens of others.** Paul says in Galatians 6:2 that by doing this, we “fulfill the law of Christ.” In other words, in displaying this kind of compassion, we actually embody everything that Jesus came to earth to do. He came to seek and save. The first verse of that passage says that we can help to “restore” someone when necessary, i.e., bring back someone who has fallen to the glorious position in Christ he should occupy. In Matthew 22:36-40, Jesus was asked, “*Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*” What greater ministry could there be than this?
 - **Is understanding toward others.** One of the greatest barriers that we face in ministering to others is the lack of trust. People hurt people, and people are hurt. Trust is certainly a rare commodity in these last days. Listening and really trying to understand the position and feelings of others can serve as the catalyst for building trust. Everyone wants to be heard, and everyone wants to be understood, but where are the listeners and the ones that will understand, if not in the Church? This is a very necessary character trait of someone in the nucleus.
- 4) ***A person in the nucleus is dynamic. This speaks of his relationship with his ministry.*** This is someone who:
- **Is focused on the task.** Jesus called it having your eye “single.” In Matthew 6:22-24 He told His disciples, “*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*” W. E. Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, explaining the word “single,” says this: “singleness of purpose keeps us from the snare of having a double treasure and consequently a divided heart.”
 - **Is committed to the cause.** A nucleus member is one that has taken personally the challenge of revival and has made it his own. He has seen that it is possible, attainable, and that he is able to be a significant part of it. He or she is someone who has understood the parable of the

man and the grain of mustard seed, knowing that if planted in his garden, it will flourish into a mighty tree.

- **Recognizes his abilities and his inabilities.** While having the faith and commitment to become useful as above, a nucleus person also knows where his limitations are practically. None of us can do everything, but we all can do something. Knowing where we are most gifted and talented is a great help in personal ministry. “I can do all things through Christ” doesn’t mean we can or must do it all. It means that whatever we are led to do is possible for us. It is always going to be the Lord’s strength that is needed in ministry.

- **Has initiative and a desire to grow.** The nucleus will be the core from which and through which new ideas and methods are born and implemented. Members of this core will work closely with the other leaders and will be happily sharing not only the load of the work, but also sharing their thoughts on how to better the overall work. A desire to go beyond the normal and leave behind the status quo is another part of this necessary characteristic. As stated above, from the nucleus will be chosen the leaders of the future; those who demonstrated their desire to move into areas of greater responsibility and delegated authority.

- **Becomes skilled through experience and practice.** Obviously, this is an ongoing trait. It starts small and grows with time. The point is, however, that this kind of quality is invaluable for those that will move into leadership one day. They learn through experience, even through their mistakes. Everyone makes these mistakes, but unfortunately, not everyone learns from them! Being dynamic means in part being good at what we do. Experience and practice help us to achieve that worthy goal. In 1 Timothy 4:7, Paul told his son in the gospel to “*exercise...unto godliness.*” The word “exercise” is the Greek word from which the English takes its word “gymnastics.” In other words, Paul tells Timothy that he is going to have to regularly “work out” a little bit, getting stronger and stronger with each repetition of the exercise.

Ready To Build

It always seems to amaze the passersby of large skyscraper building projects in our larger cities. They watch for weeks and even months as the initial work of the project is directed downward instead of up. Some of them wonder whether or not the building will ever come up out of the ground. What they do not understand, though, is the size and importance of the foundation required for these high-rise buildings. Thousands of tons of concrete and steel have to be supported by something immensely sound and secure. For that reason, much effort goes into the ground at first. Finally, once the foundation is properly built, the rest of the building (which is the most obvious to the public) can quickly go up. It’s no different with the church and its nucleus.

Pastors of local assemblies may sometimes feel frustrated that the initial growth of the church is not more rapid. But they really should not despair. They must pass through the initial laying of the foundation, which in this case is the identification and emergence on the scene of the nucleus. On this they can feel secure to build something lasting and strong. No doubt that it is easier to build quickly with no foundation, but in Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus called that “building on sand,” with the guarantee of imminent collapse. Like those watching the skyscraper construction, there will be passersby that wonder when the pastor is ever “going to build something.” Just give him time, though, and something great will start to spring up!

We started this chapter by looking at the passage in 2 Timothy 2:19-20. Let us now go to the next verse in concluding the study of this principle of the nucleus. In verse 21 Paul writes, *“If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”* As we saw earlier in this chapter, the four characteristics that we outlined as useful criteria when identifying the nucleus (spiritual, displaying integrity, compassionate, and dynamic) serve as connectors to our personal relationships: with God, with ourselves, with others, and with our own ministries. These four characteristics of those in the nucleus also serve as indicators of the qualities shown in the verse above:

- A spiritual man is a vessel unto honor
- A man of integrity is sanctified
- A compassionate man is worthy of the Master’s use
- A dynamic man is prepared for every good work.

Arriving at the stage of identifying and building on the nucleus is one of the most important principles that can ever be adhered to. Let us do it carefully, but in full expectation of great reward!

Chapter Nine

THE BEST USE OF GIFTS AND TALENTS

*But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”
--Ephesians 4:7*

Grace To All

David A. Womack, in his excellent book, Breaking The Stained-Glass Barrier (Harper & Row, New York, 1973) states on page 7 concerning Ephesus,

“Paul established a permanently successful church that was to be the center of the Christian faith over much of the next two centuries. Even though the apostle John was to warn the church against losing its first love, it would rekindle its flame and remain a burning candlestick for a very long time. In Ephesus would live the aged apostle John, and from nearby Smyrna would go forth the second-century missionary Irenaeus to preach the gospel in Lyons, France. The seven churches of the Apocalypse would be only a few of the many churches scattered all through that end of Asia Minor, and the New Testament letters to the Ephesians, the Galatians, the Colossians, and probably those of I and II Timothy and Titus were directed to this general area. Paul’s biographer, Luke, said of the apostle’s ministry at Ephesus, “So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed” (Acts 19:20). Whatever Paul did at Ephesus needs to be repeated again throughout the whole twentieth-century world.”

He then goes on to say on page 16, *“The city of Ephesus was a center for commerce, learning, sports, and a particularly popular religion. Paul knew the importance of establishing a strong base at the very hive of Asian activity, so he carefully mapped out his strategy and initiated a well-devised plan.”*

It is no wonder then that we can find so many verses in the Book of Ephesians that focus on the equipping of the saints for their personal ministries. Paul describes how the body, which is one and operates by the power of one Spirit, functions perfectly in balance. He tells how each part contributes what it can and how that contribution helps in edifying the rest of the body. He says that the body is perfectly joined together and that it is built upon the strong foundation of Jesus, the apostles, and the writings of the prophets.

We began this chapter by quoting Ephesians 4:7. It is important to note the placement of this verse and see how it is sandwiched between Paul’s treatise on the unity of the Kingdom of God (one body, one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God) and the passage concerning the church’s leaders being mindful to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. In other words, verse 7 becomes a pivotal passage of a pivotal letter written by the great apostle.

To begin to understand the verse, we need to start by re-thinking our definition of grace. Though commonly explained as “the unmerited favor of God,” the biblical use of

the word goes a little further. *The unmerited favor of God is always attached to a specific purpose.* This is simply to say that what God blesses us with is there for a reason. Whether we call it a blessing or a curse, it's there for a purpose in our lives. And this is how Paul starts off the verse: to each of us is given grace (some gift of God for an intended goal) in a certain amount (according to a measure.) How much is given? What is the measure? Paul tells us that it is given in proportion to the gift of Christ. How much did Jesus receive, and how much did Jesus give?

These questions are easily answered by looking back at Ephesians 3:20: *“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.”* The giftedness in the grace of Ephesians 4:7 is basically without limits. The only real limitation comes from within each believer. We are empowered in equal proportion to our personal desire to be useful in the kingdom. We are not saying here that we can force God to appoint us to a certain position or authority, but we should realize that the magnitude of one's personal ministry (whatever that may be by the will of God) is without limits. If one is called to pastoring, for example, he can be a great pastor. He may not necessarily move on to any other post in the church, but he can excel in pastoring if he so wishes. Should he be blessed to move on to another ministry, he can expect to be used in a great manner once again. Speaking of his own ministry, the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:9-10, *“For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”*

God is the One that decides on the grace bestowed on us leading us into ministry, but our own desire to be used by the Lord in that ministry controls much of our destiny. And according to Ephesians 3:20, that which is available to us for personal ministry is beyond our wildest dreams! In writing to the Galatians in chapter 2, verse 20, Paul clarifies the source and the strength of the power that worked through him in his particular part of the harvest field, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*

If this is true, then how vitally important it is for church leaders to recognize and carefully put to use the gifts and talents given by God in the Church in the best way possible! The Apostle Peter said it this way in 1 Peter 4:10, *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”* The zeal and desire that helps us to be used in these gifts is not enough, however. As we said in the definition of grace, *there must be a reason for the gifts and the talents.* Paul told the Church in 1 Corinthians 14:12, *“Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.”* There's the word “edifying” once again. The building up of the body is the true goal, knowing that the offshoot of that quality growth is growth in quantity also.

As we saw in the preceding principles, there is a definite order to this “evolution” of church development. It starts with a vision that outlines and focuses on the revival that God wants to give. It points to the potential harvest and explains the need for moving ahead in a clear calling and in a specific direction. Then, equipping the saints must begin to take place. As we try to equip every member in the assembly, we need to understand that not all will receive it. But those that do become equipped will also become our nucleus saints. They will begin to emerge after being shown what is available to them in terms of service in the kingdom of God. Those three principles bring us here to the fourth, the need for carefully searching for and recognizing how God gives gifts to the membership of the Church for real spiritual ministry. Let’s look at five considerations in regards to this “Best Use of Gifts and Talents.”

Wants And Needs

The first thing we should understand is **that God will provide what we need, not necessarily what we want.** Until we, as Paul exhorted in Philippians 2:5, let the mind of Christ be in us, we will continue to spiritually flounder, only hoping for a revival, but not being properly prepared for it. By totally submitting to the Lord, however, we can expect Him to give us the talents and the gifts necessary to accomplish the task that He has given.

This not only applies itself to our personal ministries, but it also means that as we grow the church, new members will bring their own gifts and talents into the body. This will enable us to do more than ever before as more and more of these God-given resources are made available. Often, pastors and other church leadership struggle with this point. It is quite common, for example, to think “If I only had this or that in my church, then I would be able to see great revival.” What they should be doing, however, is not simply dreaming of what could be; they should use what they have been already given by the Lord and seek God’s will concerning what He knows concerning the next vital step in the church’s growth. When we find that, we can expect Him to supply whatever is necessary to see that ministry come to fruition. He’s the Master of the harvest and He knows what to do and when and how to see it done! Again, that is what biblical grace is all about. He will supply what is needed for His specific purpose. Our obligation is simply to find what He expects us to do in partnership with Him. Jesus said it this way in Matthew 6:31-33, *“Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”*

We Really Can Do All Things

The second point with regards to the best use of gifts and talents is that **church leadership must be responsible for creating the environment in which every member knows that he or she can excel in personal ministry, and that this ministry is virtually without limits.** We have already established that the saints will be given gifts

and talents necessary to their ministries. This is by the grace of God. But without recognizing these gifts and encouraging the members to put them into action, many saints will never enter into true ministry. The “I can” mentality must penetrate each local assembly. And pastors will always be the key players in making this way of thinking to become a reality. It will not take place automatically; it must be carefully cultivated.

Saints come to the Lord initially because they have realized that without Him they can do nothing. It takes a very humble spirit to kneel before the King and confess that we need Him more than anything else. True repentance is a deep and lasting experience. It is not difficult, therefore, to understand that as we start off on our Christian journey we carry with us many of the old ways of thinking. Sanctification and the transformation necessary for a Christian life take time. Unfortunately, long before the Lord reveals to the church member his individual value and potential for ministry, the saint can become very discouraged by the old way of looking at himself. The mentality is more “I cannot” than “I can.” The leaders of the Church must be ready to give constant encouragement to these members in order to see them grow into places of spiritual ministry.

Too often, however, this is not the case, and therefore the saints aspire to very little in terms of responsibility, and they fail to see themselves as an integral and necessary part of a growing organism. Ephesians 3:20 needs to be preached until it becomes a reality in the lives and ministries of the church membership.

Give Them A Chance

The third consideration in the best use of gifts and talents is that **simply giving someone an opportunity to minister can make all the difference concerning his or her future ministry.** This may sound confusing at first, but the point is that senior leaders must give members the chance to prove themselves long before knowing the exact ministry in which they might excel. In other words, the “best” use will come after they start being used in the ministry of the Church. And certainly we cannot know the end of their work if there is never a beginning! As they begin to experience more and more of the hand of God on them in ministering to others, the Spirit will lead them into their respective places, chosen and ordained of God. But at the beginning, just being used in any ministry is an important step in the right direction.

This also means that senior leadership should not be afraid to bring someone from the nucleus into a place of greater responsibility and authority. *The key point is, however, that they must come from the recognized nucleus.* While it may be true that not every member of the nucleus will move into spiritual leadership, we must be careful to ensure that each new leader chosen has already proven himself to be truly part of the nucleus. When corrective action, or even replacing someone in ministry, becomes needful, it is an advantage in knowing that these saints have already shown their dedication and loyalty to the overall cause of revival in the church. These are the brothers and sisters that take no offense in being moved from one responsibility to another, knowing that the church leadership is dedicated to using their gifts and talents in the most efficacious way.

Watch And Pray

The fourth point in regards to the best use of gifts and talents is that **we must make a continual analysis of the church ministry and make corrections when necessary.** A prayerful supervision will be necessary as people in the church are moved into places of ministry. These are places of definite responsibility, and therefore they will be accountable for their work. This means being held accountable to the vision as well. Whatever part saints play in the leadership and ministry of a local or national church, it must be in harmony with the overall plan or strategy that has been set for that church. As we saw in the chapter on Vision, it is the senior leadership that is responsible for maintaining this vision. We cannot afford to shirk this responsibility.

Analyzing the success, stagnation, or failure of church ministries is one of the most important responsibilities borne by senior leadership. Not only does it help to further the present progress of those ministries, it also sets an example for future ministry leaders. These potential ministry leaders see that they will be held accountable for that with which they will be entrusted. A haphazard approach to accountability and supervised correction usually leads to a mediocre thrust of ministry.

Looking at the Book of Acts revival, it seems clear that the apostles and other church leaders believed in a “chain of command.” Certainly, the emphasis was placed on spiritual authority, and the dedication required to be used in that authority was preached and taught regularly. In other words, they strongly believed in what Jesus said in Matthew 20:27, “*And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your minister.*” At the same time, however, they believed strongly in God-given apostolic authority. Looking at 2 Peter 3:1-2 we read, “*This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.*” While having the attitude of a servant in true humility, the apostles and church leaders were nevertheless not weak in exercising the authority that they had received when they deemed it necessary. And it was definitely necessary. Many New Testament passages are dedicated to warnings against false teachers and men with contrary spirits that were trying to wrest the authority from the apostolic teachers. They were, it seems, in every region, doing their best to overthrow the true faith of the believers and pervert the gospel for their own use. Because of this, the apostles used the authority given to them by the Lord to carry out their primary responsibility of keeping the newly born church in the proper vision.

It is really no different today. We must give the saints as much room as possible for them to expand their personal experience and ministry, yet at the same time not shrink from the task of overseeing the overall progress of comprehensive ministry in the church—whether it be on the local or national level. *Start, supervise, correct, modify,* and *expand* should be watchwords for senior leaders when promoting people into new positions of spiritual ministry and authority. The “best use” will come eventually as members and leaders realize together how the available human resources (empowered by God) should be placed into positions of greater and greater usefulness in the body.

The Next Move In Ministry

The next consideration concerning the best use of gifts and talents lies in **being aware of the needs that are present and the potential for ministry**. Church leaders should be the ones that are carrying out this part of the plan. We already have seen that true ministry is always based upon need. Therefore, knowing the needs is what starts the process of targeting appropriate ministries to fulfill those needs.

The awareness of the need can come from nearly any source. Saints, pastors, and national leaders should be encouraged to point out where the absence of ministry is responsible for unfulfilled and present needs. These ministry gaps will exist in the church and also in the surrounding community. When everyone is encouraged to add input and make suggestions for future growth based on the need/ministry paradigm, then it becomes easier for church members to see where they might fit in to that new ministry.

Knowing the needs around and in the church leads to the second part of this partnership: knowing the potential for ministry. This means knowing which members are gifted in which areas and being able to balance the capacity for true ministry with the need. And this means that church leadership must be intimately acquainted with the membership. Like the shepherds that carefully look after their flocks, for example, pastors must be aware of the spiritual condition of the church membership to which they are responsible. At every level of church leadership, the senior leaders will be the ones charged with placing the right personnel into the right ministry. Therefore, a careful and regular assessment of these two areas, need and potential ministry, will help guarantee that the best use of gifts and talents is being carried out.

Focus On Training

The last point in this principle is that **ministry-specific training must be available to all church members who step forward in the hope of being more useful in the harvest ministry**. This is actually a part of the equipping process that is so very important for the body of Christ. This kind of training will actually serve as something more than just teaching the saints.

- It provides further illumination of the vision for the church by describing through the training what kind of ministries have been targeted to meet the needs.
- It provides a clear definition of the positions of responsibility that are needed in the church, and thereby opens the door of opportunity to whosoever feels called to further ministry.
- It provides a medium in which current leaders can share their experiences with future leaders, giving needed support and placing emphasis on the fact that anyone can step up to greater burden and effectiveness in the kingdom of God.
- It provides unity by delineating the direction that the church leadership feels to go, making it clear that the various ministries of the church (those for which the training is targeted) are all working together in an integral plan for revival.

- It challenges the saints by targeting more and more potential ministries based on need. In other words, it shows the church membership that, in reality, there will never be enough ministries, and that there will always be room for more volunteer laborers in the harvest field. Someone aspiring to spiritual effectiveness can certainly find a place in the revival!
- It prevents frustration in gifted saints who, without training and future places of useful ministry, would only feel bound by lack of further growth and development as they continue to mature.
- Finally, it provides an avenue through which senior leaders can help new leaders to practice and hone their skills and find ministries that are truly in the “best use” category.

Near And Dear To God

Revival and harvest are just simply too important to the Lord to take lightly. Having church related programs is not what we are really after. Equipping the saints, and helping them step into needful and appropriate ministries is what will guarantee great church growth. There’s no substitute for revival, and there’s no substitute for founding that revival on biblical principles. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:22, *“In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”* This is a perfect description of the church where the members have found their respective places of personal ministry and responsibility.

The Church cannot be and must never gravitate toward being a place where only certain leaders are used in ministry. Equipping the saints for the work of the ministry is what the role of church leadership is really all about. The more we see saints equipped and moved into their own ministries of evangelism and edification, the more we will see growth in our local and national churches.

In his opening remarks to the church at Colossae, Paul reveals what he had earnestly sought God for in fervent prayer. In Colossians 1:9-12 he brings out several points that aptly describe a church in which the members can find their own places in ministry, a church where leaders can help the saints be fitted perfectly by the will of God into positions of greater and greater spiritual responsibility and authority. He says that he desires to see these saints:

- filled with the knowledge of God’s will in wisdom and spiritual understanding
- walk worthy of the Lord, being fruitful in every good work
- increasing in the knowledge of God
- strengthened with all might according to God’s power
- and giving thanks to the Father Who made them worthy of such an inheritance.

Let this be our goal in seeking to use in the best possible way all the abundant gifts that God brings into His Church. Saints are the invaluable tools for producing true harvest, and real church leadership exists to help these members realize their God-given potential.

Chapter Ten

PRINCIPLE 5: A BALANCED MINISTRY

“This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.” --Exodus 16:16-18

Miraculous Manna

What an awesome sight it must have been; each morning rising to find another day’s sustenance lying on the ground, ready to be picked up and prepared for the day’s meals. Verse 31 of the same chapter tells us it was like “wafers made with honey.” It is difficult to say exactly what the manna from heaven really was, but it is not difficult to know what it was for. The Israelites were in desperate need of food during their long trek toward the Promised Land of Canaan. The vast multitude of those in the exodus had to be strong and fit for the journey, but where would they find food in that barren landscape? The Lord, however, had already worked it out in His divine plan. When those in the throngs of Israelites asked one another what this strange new blessing from the heavens might be, they could only wonder at its supernatural nature. “Manna” might simply be translated as “What is this?”

Moses had the answer. Symbolic of the day when Jesus, the Almighty robed in flesh, would come from heaven to save His people from their sin, Moses declared the manna to be *“the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.”* It was supernatural bread from heaven. Not only supplying the nutritional needs of the Israelites, this manna spoke of another bread that would one day come from heaven to supply the spiritual needs of a starving and dying world. In John 6:47-50 Jesus declared to His disciples, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.”*

Equally interesting, however, and in line with the fifth principle of revival we will study, is that there was always exactly enough for the needs of the people. If someone gathered too little, there would be a neighbor somewhere that had gathered more than enough. The manna given was in perfect proportion to the needs of Israel during their travels. It’s the same for the Church today. As we continue on our journey toward eternity, Jesus has everything we might ever need, and He is always ready to share it with His children as the needs arise. It may well be that what some have been given in terms of gifts and ministries is more than what other saints have received by God’s grace, but all of it is supplied with a view to a perfect supply in a perfect balance.

It is also worth noting that the Apostle Paul uses the example of the manna in his second epistle to the Corinthians. The context of chapter eight of that Book is unselfish

and Spirit-led giving. Paul was relating to the Corinthians the generosity and liberal attitude in giving that had been displayed by the saints of the Macedonian church. The apostle had been astounded at the more than generous gift the Macedonians had begged him to receive and take to their suffering brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. He recognized that they had given far beyond what he had thought was their capability, not realizing that they had been moved with compassion and directed by the Holy Spirit to do what they could in the name of service to the body of Christ. And so here, in chapters eight and nine, he exhorts the Corinthian saints to excel to a greater ministry in giving.

The subject of giving is not unlike that of ministry. In fact, they are nearly the same in essence. While we might normally think of “giving” as having to do with monetary donations, giving is really just about giving! It can come in any form of church ministry, whether in worship, in the offering, in fellowship, in teaching (and learning), in service, in mentoring, in witnessing, or in burden bearing. And in the Church, there is as much to give as there are needs. Like giving the manna that came from heaven, Jesus, by His grace, bestows on us His blessings, His gifts and talents, and His direction for the use of these things. There are those that will gather much of what is poured out, and others might receive less, but it is all there to be shared and to meet the present and future needs of the body of Christ as it continues to grow. It is given, like the manna in Exodus, in direct proportion to the need, and it is always given in balance. Ministries, therefore, should be considered in terms of being thus balanced in the Church.

A Willing Mind

Paul tells the Church in 2 Corinthians 8:11-12, *“Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have. For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.”* In these verses we can see two important elements of giving (in any relevant ministry):

- it starts with a willing mind to give, and
- one’s gift is acceptable, based upon what one has, not what one does not have.

We can only give what we have first been given! God expects no more, and He expects no less. By His abundant grace, He has made everything needed available in His Church; that which we use in evangelism, as well as the gifts needed in edifying the body of Christ. He pours it out like He did the manna—in perfect abundance and in perfect balance.

As we saw in chapter nine of this study on the principles of revival, we cannot always expect to receive *what we want*, but we certainly can expect to have *what we need* as we give ourselves to the work of the ministry. After all, Jesus promises in Matthew 7:7-11, *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then being*

evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" **In other words, there will always be plenty of manna for us if we will only be willing to search for it, find it, and use it for the intended purpose!**

Paul continues this thought in 2 Corinthians 8:14-15, "*But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: as it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.*" While it is true that Paul was talking about a financial donation to be made, the principle is certainly applicable to any other form of ministry. There should be, therefore, equality, or balance. Since God is the Supplier of all of our needs, we can expect Him to give in accordance to those needs. There will always be enough, no matter which part of the body it comes through. During a long walk, the feet are certainly contributing their fair share to the task, while the fingers may not be busier than checking the map for directions from time to time. And at the end of the journey, the feet get to rest while other parts are more actively engaged. Like the human body's tendency to work in balance, so should the spiritual body, the Church. Paul said it this way in 2 Corinthians 9:8, "*And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.*" Whether in the local church or in a national church structure, therefore, we should strive to find that perfect balance of ministries, ensuring that we have "all sufficiency in all things" and so that we may "abound to every good work."

Seed For Sowing And Seed For Making Bread

Verse ten of the same chapter is an interesting one. Here, Paul says, "*Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness.*" We are given seed to sow. We are given gifts and ministry-related talents to be used. And in sowing these, we reap not only fruit to be consumed, but also even more seed to be sown again and again. In other words, the more we give in true ministry, the more we will be given! It is then easy to understand why according to Acts 20:35, Jesus once told His followers, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" In giving we find an even greater supply of God's abundant grace! An important balance can be seen in this part of the principle: as we minister to others, we are given more and more seed to continue sowing. But some of this seed given is intended to be used in making bread to sustain the one sowing! A proper balance is important here. Using what God gives to help others must be balanced with using what we receive for ourselves. Spiritual "burnout" and Christian fatigue often occur when this good balance is not maintained. In a local congregation, for example, leaders must be careful to ensure that the saints are ministering to others, but at the same time receiving what they need for their own spiritual growth and development. Happy is the man who understands the revelation of Jesus' statement in Matthew 20:28, "*Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for others.*"

One of the keys to having a “balanced ministry” in a church, therefore, is in recognizing and encouraging the participation of all the true membership in fulfilling their individual and corporate responsibilities, using the gifts with which they have been blessed. A pastor, for example, should understand that God will bless his congregation with people who will be instrumental in the further development of the church and the expansion of ministries. National leaders should know that they will not be left “under-manned” for the task that they must pursue. The Lord, our Master of the revival, will send laborers as needed. It will be the responsibility of the church leadership, however, to discover the best use of these workers, and also to help them in fine-tuning their skills and ministries to provide the overall balanced ministry necessary.

Not Too Heavy And Not Too Light

Another aspect worth consideration concerning balance is the danger in neglecting one kind of ministry while focusing on another. It is an easy snare to fall into because some ministries are simply more easily carried out than others. Worship and praise in a local church, for example, are some of the easier ministries of a congregation. It is simply a fact that apostolic, Holy Ghost filled saints love to worship their Creator! This is one part of Christian service and dedication that is abundantly enjoyable. Like Nehemiah 8:10 says, *“Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”* Nehemiah’s exhortation to find their true joy in the Lord still applies to us in the Church today. It is like drinking the sweet and eating from the best portions on His table!

But what about other often neglected but necessary ministries? As we saw in Chapter Seven, Equipping The Saints, there is a very necessary ministry in bringing church members to the place of personal ministry in the body. This is the responsibility of the leadership described in Ephesians 4:11-12. And to carry it further, the saints (every member of Christ’s body) are then responsible for taking what they have been given by God and sharing it with others. If this ministry of personal evangelism is not taking place in a local assembly, that church might be said to have an unbalanced approach to serving the needs of the congregation and the surrounding community. Teaching Bible studies, witnessing, and inviting others to come to church to experience what we have enjoyed is not always easy for everyone, but it still remains a vital part of a balanced approach to real ministry. Paul said in Romans 12:15, *“Rejoice with them that rejoice,”* which is certainly easy enough to do, but the verse continues, *“and weep with them that weep.”* And therein is the challenge of ministry to others we call burden bearing.

Unlike the saint who can only find it convenient to pray for his own needs and yet fails in interceding for others, men and women in church leadership must be disciplined in ensuring a more balanced ministry in the body. And this brings us to another reality concerning balance in church ministry: **a body of well balanced saints will most often form a well balanced congregation, outfitted with ministerial gifts and abilities that can serve the needs before them.** Church leaders, therefore, should focus their energy on producing spiritually well-rounded members in the body of Christ, men and women of

faith wholly dedicated to using the tools and equipping made available to them for the furtherance of the ministries of evangelism and edification.

Another potential trouble spot and possible cause of unbalance in ministry is competition in the different branches of the church. Pastors and other leaders have to be careful because each of us has his or her “favorite” kind of ministry and each may have his own specialty. It sometimes becomes too tempting to overly promote one of these special areas of ministry to the detriment of the others, while forgetting that every individual form of church ministry should contribute directly to the overall goals of edification and evangelism. While God will indeed pour out His spiritual manna on us in the form of gifts and talents in the body of believers, senior leaders must remain vigilant in directing this manna to those in need, and ensuring that there is neither too little nor too much.

Still another danger lies hidden inside very dynamic leaders. Sometimes, a leader’s strong zeal and desire for spiritual advancement is too ardently imposed on those that follow. In other words, what seems obvious and easy to the leader may be puzzling and difficult to the followers. A balance must be struck between these two perspectives. While not limiting the vision and capacity of a strong spiritual leader, we must be careful to lead others at a reasonable pace--not too slow, but also not too fast. Visionary pastors fall prey to this too often. As they feel the Lord leading them in their own ministry and their own work, they often expect others to have the same level of desire and quick obedience that has shaped their lives and calling. But this can quickly spiral downwards to frustration on the part of the membership as they fail to grasp the same God-given concepts at the same pace. **We should carefully balance, therefore, the vision cast with the capacity to receive it.** Clear communication of the task and goals coupled with ample education and equipping for the task will go a long way in providing this sort of balance.

Too Much Manna?

One might wonder about why there would be a danger in too much manna being poured out each day. It might seem like “too much” would be a sign of God’s blessing and His ability to abundantly supply. But there actually is an important lesson in His giving exactly what was needed. First of all, it is important to realize that, more than His ability to give in abundance, is His ability to give in exactness! Never too little, never too much, and never too late are characteristics of the Almighty. In other words, He proved beyond a doubt that He would always give as necessity demanded.

Secondly, channeling this abundant supply through the hands of men and women always invites corruption. Let us consider Paul’s admonition to the Church in 1 Corinthians 12:1-2, *“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.”* The two verses seem in opposition, but are in fact completely harmonious. Paul did not want the Corinthian Church to fall short in the operation of the spiritual gifts available to the body, yet he also felt it needful to warn against the abuse of these gifts.

“Carried away” is an apt way of describing us **when we focus too much on the ministry itself rather than on the fulfillment of needs through the appropriate ministry.** As we continue to read in the same chapter we can see that what we often call the “gifts of the Spirit” were very important to the Church. Evidently, the Corinthians relished these gifts more than most, for Paul found it needful to exhort the members there concerning the purpose of this supernatural “manna.”

In verse 4 he says, “*Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.*” This speaks of the source of the manna. Verse 5 tells us, “*And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.*” This means that God must remain the overall director of these gifts. In other words, like the manna from heaven that the Israelites found, we must be careful to see the intended use of the spiritual gifts and talents with which we have been so abundantly blessed. Then, in verse 6 we find, “*And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.*” This is the way it must remain in His great Church! When Paul said that God works “all in all,” perhaps he meant that the Lord works *all the gifts through all the members.* He is, after all, the Head of the body, desiring to direct what is needed to where it is needed--not too little and not too much. It is easy to see, therefore, the importance placed upon the proper use in **balancing the resources against the needs.**

All Eyes And No Ears

“*But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.*” Here in verse 18 Paul gives us a glimpse of a perfectly functioning body, each of the members operating in balance and harmony with the rest. But what would be the result if the various members never answered to their specialized calls to service? It would simply mean unbalance and compromised effectiveness!

As Paul put it in verse 17, “*If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?*” We could substitute in these verses our own specialties: if all were preaching in the Church, where would the ministry of witnessing be? Or, if all were praying, where would the preaching appear? The symmetry of the human body is a wondrous and beautiful thing created by the Almighty Himself. Can His Church afford less than spiritual symmetry? Paul might have answered that question in verse 14, “*For the body is not one member, but many.*”

Chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians, of course, is Paul’s treatise on the proper administration of these spiritual gifts that were so easily abused by the new members at Corinth. In verse 26 he simply concludes, “*Let all things be done unto edifying.*” Whether we might contribute with a ministry of song, preaching, witnessing, praying, teaching, or one of the special gifts of the Spirit, it must all join together and work harmoniously to the building up of the body of Christ. The manna was not intended to make certain families fat while others slowly starved to death. Neither should the zeal of certain individuals be allowed to sidetrack true spiritual gifts and talents from their intended targets. We must not be afraid of such gifts and talents, but neither should we be negligent in ensuring their proper use for building the Church!

Pastors, for example, should be careful in assessing their own strengths and weaknesses in various areas of church ministry. Some are abundantly gifted in prophetic ministry; others are superior in teaching or preaching skills. While using these particular strengths to bless the church is important, it is equally vital to look for help from other leaders that can excel in areas that are more difficult for the pastor. This does not in any way undermine the authority of the pastor, nor does it change his responsibility. In fact, this balance speaks highly of his superior leadership skills. There is no room for competition when it comes to spiritual ministry! **Each has his or her special gifts and spiritual strength areas, and these should be exploited for the common good of the body.** Part of the church's mentality should be centered on the need for, and development of new leaders to place into new and relevant ministries. In a local assembly, for example, the saints should be able to clearly see the value the pastor places on this kind of leadership and its development. "Sowing on good ground" then takes on a new and deeper meaning and can be better understood in a very practical sense.

Head Knowledge And Heart Knowledge

These two subjects represent yet another need of careful balance in true spiritual ministry. The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 4:15, "*For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*" In other words, there's a big difference in instructors and fathers. Perhaps this is also the difference between head knowledge and heart knowledge. **Balance means cultivating a caring approach with spiritual knowledge and ministry.** It cannot simply consist of passing information on to others, but must be seen as fathering others in a climate of both wisdom and love.

We should note the progressive development described by the apostle in 2 Peter 1:5-8, "*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" This, after all, is the ultimate goal of all we might call ministry: producing caring and compassionate saints that will be fruitful in the harvest.

A Just Weight And Balance

In summing up what we have discussed in this chapter, let us list eight points in considering a balanced ministry:

- It should be balanced knowing that there will always be enough resources for the present needs, some being given more than others, but all contributing to the same eternal purpose.
- Ministry starts with a willing mind and is balanced in knowing that we can only give what we have been given.

- The seed is given both to sow and to use for bread. A careful balance must be maintained between what we give to others and what is used for sustaining ourselves.
- A balanced church consists of balanced leaders and balanced saints.
- Leaders must be careful to balance the vision being cast with the capacity of the followers to receive it.
- While rejoicing in the gifts and talents given, we must be mindful that while there are diversities of gifts, there is but one Spirit. While there are differences of administrations, there is but one Lord. And while there are diversities of operations, there is but one God working in them all. None is more important than the other.
- We must balance the strengths and weaknesses in our leadership by seeking help from other leaders.
- We must balance how much we know with how much we love.

Proverbs 16:11 teaches, “*A just weight and balance are the LORD’S: all the weights of the bag are his work.*” It is God’s will that the ministry provided in and through the Church be a balanced one. The key lies in allowing Him to direct the work: in His way, in His timing, and by His strength.

Chapter Eleven

PRINCIPLE 6: A GROWING ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Revival-minded churches grow. These are the churches that have applied and dedicated themselves to the five previously studied principles of the revival. The result will be growth, both in quality and in quantity. As we begin to discuss organization, we are actually indicating two needs of the growing church: *organization* and *administration*. The revival must be structured in both of these areas. It must be organized in order to guarantee that it continues to grow in the will of God. And, it must be properly administered to ensure that it does not grow faster than the will of God. In other words, *we have to organize and administer the revival in order to contain the revival*.

As early as chapter 11 of Acts, the elders and apostles began to experience the need for further organization of the Church's expanding growth. In fact, in that chapter, we can see several areas that were taken into consideration concerning the organization of the movement.

- In verses 3-18 the policy and the future doctrinal stance of the Church are discussed.
- In verses 19-22 they consider the expansion of the Church into new areas.
- In verses 23-26 there is the need for further administrative leadership brought to light.
- In verse 27 spiritual gifts in operation (specifically, prophetic gifts) signal the need for spiritual oversight and restraint. Imagine the prophetic gifts of utterance without supervisory authority!
- Then, in verse 29, the Church gets organized in terms of future offerings to be taken for the relief of struggling saints in Jerusalem.

All of this points to the fact that as the Church grew, needs grew. As needs grew, they found that ministry in a revival church should grow as well. This simply meant that the Church began to organize the movement in order to properly oversee and administer it. They contained the revival, yet at the same time adequately prepared for further growth.

Another consideration given by the apostles was in regards to false teachers and false apostles that were very early on making known their destructive potential in the apostolic church. Nearly every New Testament writer devotes time to explaining the need to be on guard against these evil seducers. And, of course, we can read the decision of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem in the 15th chapter of Acts when a matter of doctrinal dispute was brought to their attention. They were constrained to make a ruling, and this ruling was applied in a global sense to the entire Church. In other words, the headquarters church in Jerusalem, and its leadership, were looked upon to decide policy concerning a doctrinal position for the entire body. They were, therefore, organized knowing that they were responsible for administering the fellowship of believers.

Someone had to feel this obligation for “controlling” the expansion of the Church. It was a growing body and therefore needed proper diet, protection, and nurture in order to continue to grow. Church government came into existence, not just as a matter of survival, but also as a means of modeling the previous revival principles in order to see even more spiritual growth.

We can perhaps even see the early beginnings of “licensing” senior ministers and leaders. In Acts 15:24, the apostles wrote, *“Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment.”* This simply means that though they had come out from the Jerusalem Church, they had been given no recognition or authority to carry a new and unapproved doctrine to the churches in Antioch. Therefore, the apostles and elders wrote this famous letter to Antioch, confirming what was to be emphasized and what was to be avoided in certain doctrinal and practical aspects of the Christian faith. Today, licensing tries to serve the same purpose in certifying that the license holder is of the same doctrinal persuasion of the sending body, and that he is dedicated to propagating the same message of salvation and holiness. He, therefore, becomes accountable to the body that sent him. Again, this “contains” the revival in a very positive sense. **Guarding against expansion that is too rapid for supervision is imperative in a revival church.**

This chapter, the sixth principle of revival, is devoted to seven aspects that must be provided for when considering the growing organizational structure of the Church. By adhering to these, and ensuring that they are applied in a local, regional, or national context, we can rest assured that we will both contain the revival and allow a proper development and sustainable growth therein.

1) Truth Is Supplied And Maintained

Just like the apostles and elders of the Book of Acts, we must be vigilant in establishing and guarding the truth that we hold so precious. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to *“...speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”* (1 Corinthians 1:10)

Jude wrote that we *“...should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”* (Verse 3)

John was very explicit in admonishing the Church concerning false teachers that would spring new doctrines on the new believers. He said very frankly, *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”* (1 John 4:1)

After the severe warning of 2 Peter chapter 2, the apostle goes on in chapter 3, verse 2 to say, *“That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.”*

And, of course, there is the apostle Paul, whose writings are replete with admonitions and exhortations concerning sound doctrine, a love for the truth, and the dangerous end times when there would be evil seducers becoming worse and worse with time. Much of Paul's teaching centered upon the qualifications of being useful in the ministry of the saints.

One thing is for sure, the apostles were not compromisers when it came to the truth! Paul "marveled" upon learning of the Galatians' temptation to turn toward another "gospel," which, of course, was not in fact a gospel at all, but rather a perversion of the true gospel of Jesus. Subtle twists and turns of the truth have led many to the sad state of a compromised commitment to Christ. Someone in the church's administrative authority must be responsible for the broadcasting of the real truth and its care. Maintaining the truth in the face of temptation and cruel compromise will never be an easy task, but it certainly remains one of the most sacred.

When we speak of maintaining the truth, we must keep in mind that there are two aspects of the truth: *doctrine and holiness*. Both of these should be based upon the scriptures alone, and not fall subject to cultural or traditional beliefs. Church membership must know very well that the teaching presented as saving truth is founded upon clear Biblical precepts. This, after all, is the Church that is "*built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*" (Ephesians 2:20)

As said in an earlier chapter, principles never change, while applications do. **To make a cultural application of a scriptural principle is a valid one. To base a so-called doctrinal "truth" on a culture or tradition is, however, invalid.** A growing and expanding church will constantly face the temptation to change what is truly sacred. Promises of easier gospels or compromised definitions of biblical holiness will have to be soundly dealt with by the leadership of a revival church, whether at the local or national level. Leaders at each of these levels should understand that the rest of the body is standing with them on truth. There is one Head and one body only.

2) Transmission, Maintenance, And Enlargement Of The Vision

While the subject of casting the vision as a revival principle has already been discussed, it must be remembered that as a result of the application of the principles, the church will grow. **The vision must grow with it.** We have also already discussed in this chapter the fact that organizing and administering helps to contain the revival. Now it must be seen that we are actually *containing the revival within the vision*.

The growth experienced should never extend beyond a clear and proper God-given understanding and direction for the revival. The vision should propel the revival, and the growth of the revival will certainly help to shape the vision for the future.

Let us consider the application of the six principles studied:

- **Vision**
- **Equipping The Saints**
- **Building On The Nucleus**
- **Best Use Of Gifts And Talents**
- **A Balanced Ministry**
- **A Growing Organizational Structure.**

After following them according to their designated parts in the order, we actually arrive back at principle number one again with a larger vision than before because this time around, the church has grown according to those principles.

Instead of a circular representation of the church's growth, it actually can be better shown as a spiraling growth. In other words, instead of simply returning to the first principle and restarting the list, we are actually arriving at the first step in a more mature and experienced position of church growth.

Each time through the steps produces more church growth. We are, after all, continuing to constantly cast the vision, constantly equipping new and existing members for effectiveness in the ministry, always identifying who rises to the place of being included in the nucleus, searching for and making best use of the gifts and talents given, constantly ensuring that church ministry is balanced according to needs and resources, and organizing the church with a view to proper and spiritual administration in order to contain the revival within the vision. Each time around, we find we are growing. As the church revival grows, the vision should be growing with it.

Another consideration here is the fact that there will be new key players in the revival that have become part of this growing body. There will be new talents, new gifts, new ministers, etc. There will also be new leadership that rises to help in the vision and accomplishment thereof. While all of this is very positive, and is something we certainly hope for in every church, there exists the lurking danger of a false vision that may arrive with this new leadership. Just as truth must be maintained during growth, vision must be maintained as well.

In the chapter concerning vision, we saw that one part of the principle is that vision must be communicated regularly. This doesn't stop after a little bit of revival church growth! In fact, it actually can become an even bigger part of the church mentality. There are now more members than before who have experienced the growth that a sound church assembly can enjoy.

We also looked at the fact that we would know when the vision for the church is being successfully cast and communicated. We used the gauge of principle number two, "equipping," to judge this success. In other words, when equipping is effectively taking place, we know that the vision is getting to the target. This still applies in the spiraling stage of church growth. Each time around in the spiral brings us more equipping, more

of a nucleus, etc. This means that more and more of the saints are becoming joined to the vision. It means also that more and more resources become available to balance against the present needs. And that means that the vision must expand with the revival in order to effectively minister to those needs.

Experience is a very good teacher. As a church grows in a very positive way, based upon sound biblical principles, the confidence of the congregation grows with it. There is more and more of a feeling that, “With God, all things are possible.” It is no longer just an inspiring verse of scripture; it becomes a reality in the local congregation or national church organization. Members realize that these principles are effective, and when applied, they help us to know that we are in harmony with the Lord in His Kingdom work. Happy is the pastor that knows the membership is with him because they know that he is in the right vision. Happy too are the members that have such a pastor! Even happier is the pastor who knows that more and more of the membership is becoming joined to the ever-expanding vision given to the local body.

3) **Modeling Principles That Never Change**

Another purpose served by a growing organizational structure is that of a “model.” In other words, it serves to inspire and provide a pattern for the future work. A “mother” congregation finds a great example of this part of the principle in the birth of a daughter work. The leader of the new daughter work will no doubt use very similar strategies and methods that he saw while a leader in the mother church. And why should he not? They worked there, and if they are truly principles that can be applied anywhere, they should certainly work for him. Modeling removes the danger of a haphazard approach to church growth. It also helps to eliminate the “reinvention of the wheel” that is so often seen. This occurs when every new leader has to discover for himself the principles that bring revival. The sad truth is that not every such leader finds them! If, however, the principles have become part of his experiential qualification, the new leader will already know how to apply them.

Modeling also serves in presenting a “standard of acceptance” to the work. This means that the criteria necessary for real and sustainable church growth are clearly delineated, and that anything less than these may be seen as unacceptable.

It is worth noting that the apostle Paul spent three years of ministry in one city. Normally he would not have used so much time in establishing a new work and training a leader or leaders for that work before moving on to the next stop in his journeys. But at Ephesus he had seen something special. He had recognized there an open door for something that could impact an entire region of the world. And so it did. No wonder then that he would have the vision and insight to invest three precious years in intense training at Ephesus, building what might be called a model church. It was this work at Ephesus that was responsible for all of Asia hearing the word during the space of two years (Acts 19:10.) They were reached, equipped, and sent to reach others. They became able ministers of the New Testament. To this group of leaders Paul wrote, “*From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth,*

according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:16)

4) Communion And Brotherhood

Being part of a growing revival church means being part of something that is alive and exciting. It means knowing that we can make a substantial and meaningful contribution toward the accomplishment of the mission on which Jesus sent us. And that means we become a true “team.”

Let us consider these first four aspects of the sixth principle of revival in the context of an athletic team. Part one was the necessity to remain committed to the truth. This is what identifies us and starts the process of real unity on the team. It’s like a team uniform that we wear. There is a certain pride in wearing the uniform of a good team. It’s great to know that the team is well known and respected for its abilities. There is comfort in knowing that others in the same uniform have similar goals, participate in the same objectives, and share a common vision of success. We are now part of something that works together. We can depend on one another. We are one.

Part two is concerned with the vision. To the athletic team, vision is like the strategy they use in approaching the game. In order to win, there must first be a winning strategy. Certainly, the coach is the one responsible for having and maintaining this strategy before and during the game. He knows how to win, what is required to win, and he knows who are to be used as key players in the victory.

Part three is modeling. Here, the team begins to win. Not only do they win, but also they continue to win. Why? The strategy is a good one, and it works. In fact, the team starts to see that they will continue to be victorious by regular practice and by using the sound strategy of their faithful coach. A good kind of pride now begins to emerge. The team members are now more united than ever. They have planned and practiced together. They have fought and suffered together. Now they see that they also win together.

Part four, communion and brotherhood, is therefore no surprise. Team members are happy and safe in their respective places on the team. When the championship trophy is awarded, it makes no difference as to who sat on the bench for most of the season or who started in most games; the fact is that the team is victorious. That’s what teamwork is really all about anyway. Each player knows that he is part of something that makes a difference. Each church member of a growing revival church should feel similarly. This is a great team and we really can make a difference!

5) Submission To Authority And Accountability

There are usually lots of struggles in this part. But in reality, when the first four parts are adhered to, number five is almost guaranteed. Consider the team again. If the team is always winning, what team member will question the coach or his plans? If the team

consistently loses, however, who would not question the coach? Too many leaders demand submission and accountability of their inferiors when the fact is that they are not providing sufficient positive leadership as “coaches.” They have a losing strategy, but expect the team members to bow down to their authority.

National church leadership should provide the kind of vision and strategy that leads the church forward in positive and sustained progress. Local church pastors should show the congregation that they have the right means and method for realizing true revival at the local level. This will go a long way in ensuring that others will submit to this kind of positive leadership.

It should be noted that this kind of accountability is not something that is automatic, however. It actually is systematic. It requires, for example, clear and open communication between leaders. And it must be clearly shown that accountability is a two-way street. Leaders are accountable to each other. Pastors are accountable in leading the congregation, and members are accountable to pastors. They are equally important, though they share different authorities in their respective responsibilities.

As the organization grows, new positions of responsibility are needed. In each one of these posts, the limits of authority and the accountability required must be clearly defined. This helps to eliminate most of the confusion that leaders seem to regularly encounter. It helps to put at ease those in leadership. They don't have to worry about others over-stepping the boundaries if the boundaries are clearly seen. Just as the organization/administration contains the revival and keeps it in the vision, accountability will help *to keep the leaders in the vision*. After all, responsibilities and the authority that goes with them should be already defined by the vision. Where we are going and how we are going to arrive there are important in shaping the positions and responsibilities given during the journey.

6) Administration Based Upon Responsibility, Not Position

This aspect refers to the equality of importance concerning the “positions” that leaders hold. It should never be a matter of who is more important than whom! Like the athletic team discussed above, each player has his role in the winning strategy. Authority will be different in each case, but importance to the team remains equal. What good is a coach without his starting players? What good are the starting players without the reserves? Some players will later become coaches themselves, and will need to be replaced by other able members of the team. They are all important, and they all contribute toward the same end.

Members of the body need to see that there will always be places of spiritual responsibility to which they can aspire. As they grow in grace, they should know that larger responsibility awaits their willingness to minister. This is part of an expanding vision in an expanding revival. Church growth will mean new places of leadership opening up as the ministry grows. This is true on a national, regional, or local level.

More growth means more needs. More needs means more ministries. And more ministries require more leaders.

One of the most important roles that senior leaders can provide is that of making known the value of individual ministry in the body. This means clearly communicating the importance of each member as he puts his hand to the plow and does the work that God has shown him to do. Paul said in Ephesians 4:7, “*But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*” To help members realize the activation of that grace is one of the most rewarding things a pastor/leader can experience. We are helping people to rise to places not of importance, but to places of spiritual responsibility and true Christian ministry.

7) Flexibility In The Structure

We would do well in remembering that this structure we have created is a growing one. It must, therefore, remain flexible. We must be ready to make changes as they become necessary. Leaders will come and some will go, but the vision goes on. New leadership will emerge as new ministries are targeted. Ministry is based on need, and therefore as needs change, ministries will change with them. We should never become so locked into a certain way of doing things that we cannot discover a new and better way of accomplishing the task. We should be flexible enough to learn from our experiences. Some applications of the principles may prove to be outdated and obsolete. Other applications may prove to be complete failures. But the principles will remain as true as ever. We should have a structure to contain the revival that is flexible enough and adaptable enough to provide a climate in which we can find *the right application for the principles involved*. In the end, it is true spiritual ministry by the saints that is important. *Whatever takes us to that point is what we should be seeking.*

Flexibility in the structure is not to be confused with compromising the message or the principles. It simply speaks of the reality that there will be times for modification or elimination of some plans that we have made. Parents of growing children know very well that they will have to provide different kinds and sizes of clothing as the children grow older. The principle is simply that clothing is needed! But the application is concerned with the proper clothing for the proper child at the proper time. In the Kingdom of God, one size does not fit all. There may, in fact, be many ways in which one or more of the revival principles may be applied. It is our responsibility as leaders to find the appropriate ones. In order to do this, we should remain open to new and different ways of spiritual ministry.

One last consideration of being flexible is concerned with the fear that is often felt when it is time for appointing members to places of spiritual responsibility. Although we would like to know that someone’s personal ministry will be an eternal success, we really cannot make such a guarantee. Therefore, we should be assured that if something or someone simply does not work out the way we had hoped and planned, the position of responsibility could be removed and given to another.

Present and aspiring leadership should understand that real ministry precedes position. In other words, a real leader is someone that has already qualified for a position before he assumes it. A real leader is in a position because of who he is. He is not defined by the position that he holds. Rather, his position should be defined by the person he really is!

Summing Up

Paul wrote a perfect conclusion to this principle of a growing structure. He wrote in *Ephesians 2:21*, “*In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*” This is really the goal in structuring the organization. It is not to provide places of personal importance for the members or leaders. It is not there to provide fancy titles for vain positions. It is there to ensure that every member has the opportunity to grow into the place of spiritual responsibility and authority that God wants to give him or her. It is there to help them see that they are truly part of God’s house, so fitly framed together that each part is perfectly joined to its neighbor.

As the structure grows with the revival, more and more perfectly joined pieces will appear to take their places in this great house. Rather than squabbling over who is more important than the other, the members grow into a beautiful brotherhood that is dedicated to seeing even greater growth. This is the church that the apostles looked for, and it is the pattern that we must ourselves look toward today!

Chapter Twelve

REVIVING THE STONES

Having finished taking a look at the six principles of revival, the questions for many of the readers might be, “What next? Where can we begin? How can we start to make the necessary changes in our ways of thinking and operating that could make the difference in the spiritual harvest that we seek?”

Perhaps one of the best ways to begin making the transition would be to study a biblical pattern that proved to be one of the greatest examples of men and women working under a godly leader and in harmony with the Lord. A miraculous work springs up in full view of every doubting spirit and unbelieving spectator, while the participants in God’s divine plan realize the accomplishment of His will through the work of their hands. God can certainly do anything, anywhere, anytime, and in and through anyone—anyone, that is, that will simply cooperate with Him and say, “Here am I, send me.”

Weeping, Fasting, And Praying

“So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.” --Nehemiah 4:6

It wasn’t going to be easy. Everyone and everything seemed to say it was an impossible task. There wasn’t even a good way of explaining how it could be done—but it had to be done. It would take the hand of God to bring it to pass without a doubt. But more than that, it would require the faith and spiritual insight of a man that became one of the most dynamic leaders that Israel would ever know. It took a man that would not compromise, neither would he cow down to the scorn and the reproach heaped on him from others. He had one central mission to accomplish. He was the one chosen to rebuild the broken down walls of the once glorious city of Jerusalem. His name was Nehemiah.

Reading the above verse in chapter four of this great Book of Nehemiah, we might be hasty in thinking that it wasn’t really such a big deal to rebuild. But this verse and the ones preceding it tell a story of the kind of perseverance that is often lacking in today’s church leadership. What Nehemiah had been entrusted to do, and what we have been given to do is not really all that different.

He built the walls of an actual city with stones and timbers. We are faced with the task of building the Church of the living God. The Apostle Peter described the Church in 1 Peter 2:5, “*Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*” In just the same way that Nehemiah was responsible for the placement of each stone in its proper place, the

senior leadership of today's Church must be careful in the building of God's spiritual house.

The zeal and the resolution shown by this great Old Testament character serve as an example to us today. In this, the concluding chapter, we will start by looking at the process that culminated in Nehemiah's great and lasting effort in rebuilding Jerusalem's walls.

We would do well by understanding the condition of Jerusalem before Nehemiah's intervention. Here was the city long revered and spoken of throughout the eastern world, but now broken and laid waste. It was a city that had suffered at the hands of its enemies, and its present condition was one of shame and compromise. The city that had once been established to show forth the glory of God had been reduced to a sad showcase of misery and neglect.

The Persian ruler, Artaxerxes, had appointed a pair of governors to oversee the once great city, but even these men were outsiders, men that came from places like Moab and from tribes such as the Ammonites. What a reproach all of this had turned out to be! But things began to change when news of the city's plight fell on the ears of a faithful man of God in the Persian king's palace at Shushan.

Hearing that visitors from Judah had recently arrived in Persia, Nehemiah, one of the king's cupbearers, requested any news there might be from these men. He was shocked to hear a report that described the pitiful condition of his beloved Jerusalem. For many years now, the city had lain exposed and helpless, its walls broken down and its gates burned with fire. Nehemiah could only imagine the extent of the damage. His reaction, though, did not stop with despair and feelings of utter hopelessness concerning what could be done. The plight of the city became a matter of prayer and fasting for this great man.

What Jerusalem needed more than anything else at this time was a visionary leader like Nehemiah who would prove to be an instrument in the Lord's hand of deliverance and revival. The situation was indeed grave, but God was ready and willing to work His great power through a human vessel that would simply be willing to volunteer. Verse 4 of chapter 1 tells us that he prayed and fasted for certain days. We cannot know how long, but we can know that he was deeply affected by the simple news that the travelers had brought. And that signals the first step in this biblical pattern of implementing the necessary changes toward revival: ***a simple observance had become a matter of deep prayer and fasting.***

Certainly Nehemiah was not the first, nor the only one to have heard the sad news concerning Jerusalem. But he was the first one to respond to the challenge. We may often pray that we become more sensitive to the call of God in our lives, but will we be ready and positioned to respond to the call? Nehemiah did so. It became his call, his burden, and his responsibility to act. It would have been much easier to wait on someone else to act, but what if that never came to pass? It might have been more convenient to

blame the present on the past, and simply ignore the condition of Jerusalem like everyone else. But this is not what true leaders do. Real leaders initiate needed change!

Send Me Unto Judah

After a sincere time of prayer and repentance on behalf of the children of Israel and for himself, Nehemiah brings the need before the king of Persia with a simple yet profound request in Nehemiah 2:5: “*Send me unto Judah.*” At this point, there is no clear plan on rebuilding, no materials with which to build, and no personnel joined with him in the idea. But God starts with a man; one leader who stands out from the rest when the opportunity presents itself and says, “Send me.”

It’s really no different today. God will use someone who is ready and willing, someone that is not willing to settle for a compromised look at church growth. He will use someone that is moved to action upon learning of the true condition of his spiritual Jerusalem. While everyone else may justify the present condition of his local or national church experience, a revival-minded leader will hear the call and obey. ***It must become a personal experience, springing from a personal burden for change.***

Three Days In Jerusalem

Once arriving at the formerly great city, Nehemiah did not immediately launch forth into a building program, nor did he boast of his great plans to the locals. The first three days were spent in a careful assessment of the present condition of the walls and gates.

Verse 12 of chapter 2 tells us that though he had “some few men” with him, he did not reveal all that was in his heart concerning what had to be done. Too often we hear great goals being set in public, goals that are impossible to attain because, quite simply, God had not inspired them. Much more important than sounding good to others, leaders know that one of their chief roles is to inspire others according to a God-given plan, a plan that is part of the overall vision of the Church. ***And this takes time and careful analysis of the past and present in order to formulate a plan for the future.*** As was stated in the revival principles we have already studied, we cannot go forward with certainty if we do not know where we are now!

Nehemiah made his assessment each night, carefully considering the challenge before him. It was one thing to hear of the task while safely at Shushan, but it was another thing all together to see the actual condition of Jerusalem. Nehemiah had to see for himself. Somehow the vision of what needed doing had to become even more personal than before. And that is why, for three days, he traveled and inspected, planned and considered, without the knowledge of others and without announcing goals that would certainly sound unattainable. He knew that at first he might be the only one to believe it was possible. After all, he was the only one that answered the call until then! Then, and only then, after his precise assessment of the past, present, and future was made, he made the clear call to action. He was ready to answer any question and could explain how and where each family could be placed in the task. This was not a vain goal he was casting

before the populace; Nehemiah had a plan that was custom made for “reviving the stones.”

Let Us Rise Up And Build

In verses 17 and 18 of chapter 2, we can see the revelation of the vision that Nehemiah had kept to himself thus far: *“Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king’s words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.”*

This plan being revealed had truly come from God, and that is what casting the vision is really all about. It consists of a leader describing where the Church needs to go, and giving a clear plan of how to get there. It goes on in clearly showing that this is attainable and that it is not at all impossible. That is vision, and that’s real leadership!

This kind of dynamic character in Nehemiah now affects the rest of the Jews at Jerusalem. The same ones that up until now had done nothing to rectify the situation are rallied together behind the leadership of one single personality. What a change begins to take place when others start to receive the vision being cast! Reviving the stones of Jerusalem’s walls had to begin by reviving the people of Jerusalem. And so it remains today—*real revival in the Church begins with real revival in the saints*. They must first be able to see like God sees; the task is a great one, but they are capable with God’s help. He will equip them and use them in their respective responsibilities. *It always starts with a vision being cast, and a vision being received by the nucleus.*

There’s Always Resistance!

It seems to come with the territory. Once the vision starts to be received by the people of Jerusalem, immediately there is resistance inspired by the so-called rulers of the area, Sanballat and Tobiah. They laughed at Nehemiah and the others that were joined with him in the vision. They called it a rebellious act against the king. People just don’t seem to be apt to change easily. Change brings resistance because change attacks the status quo. Were these Jews rebelling against the king? Or was Nehemiah expressing his dissatisfaction with the present situation under the reign of the king and his designates? *We can expect those that are compromisers and accustomed to “maintaining” rather than growing to challenge rising leaders that are looking for more.* They will be labeled as rebels and worse all too often. But this is part of senior leadership’s sacrifice to the task.

Nehemiah 2:20 concludes the chapter with a serious allegation made against these governors that stood against the needed change in Jerusalem. *“Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.”* Again,

according to the vision, Nehemiah states the outcome of the effort—they will succeed, it is possible, nothing will defeat them. But beyond that, he informs these so-called leaders that they will never be part of what God wants to do. They can have no portion of the revival, and they have no right to the revival. They cannot be part of the revival while they do not share the spirit of the revival!

Out Of The Heaps Of Rubbish

While Sanballat continued his attempts to discredit the vision and to stop Nehemiah, the people continued their labors. Chapter 3 is a revelation of the plan for each family engaged in the work. Every person had a place and a particular responsibility. Each one was dispatched to a certain portion of the wall and the gates.

God, working through the leadership of Nehemiah, had carefully chosen and made the best use of the gifts and talents available. The walls were going up, and no amount of resistance could stop them! A great revival of stones was taking place. And the more that their enemies claimed its impossibility, faster went the work. The more the resistance mounted, higher went the walls. With one hand equipped with a weapon of warfare and the other hand equipped with a tool of reconstruction, the workers put themselves to the task. What a picture of real revival this is for today's church leadership. This is what we must be about.

Casting the vision and equipping the saints for the work of the ministry, building with the nucleus, and the best use of the gifts and talents available will indeed bring a glorious work out of the heaps of stones and timbers. We must not forget also that there was a careful balance of the ministry on the walls. They went up together—no section was left out.

Sanballat had cruelly mocked the leadership of Nehemiah and the work of his followers in asking, "Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?" The answer, however, was a resounding, "Yes!"

A Mind To Work

And so they built the wall according to the vision and the plan that Nehemiah had provided. Once joined to this vision, the people of Jerusalem became a united force in reviving the dead city. They had a mind to work. In other words, they knew what needed to be done, how to do it, and they knew that despite the resistance, God would favor them and they would be able to complete the job. That's a real revival!

It's really not so different today. In every local church and in every regional or national administration, *we need visionary leaders to answer the call to "more."* There is more out there—we do not have to settle for less than God's best design for His beloved Church. We can be the ones used by His mighty power to effect the necessary changes that will revive the stones and build new walls to His glory and honor. But it has to start with leadership and an honest look at the present condition of the revival.

Is it really taking place as it should? Are our churches growing the way they are intended? Are we adhering to the unchanging principles that are part of true revival and which bring us to a real harvest? What is really holding us back from pursuing the clear goal of going into all the world and preaching the gospel to every creature?

- Casting the vision
- Equipping the saints for ministry
- Building on the nucleus
- Using the gifts and talents available in the best possible way
- Providing a balanced ministry in the church
- Organizing and administering for sustained growth

We can do this. It is possible. God does want to use each of us in His divine plan for revival and harvest. Nehemiah prayed, “Send me to Judah.” Can we be bold enough to pray, “Send us into the harvest?” Psalm 85:6 asks, “*Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?*” May we ask the same?