Building a Dynamic Church

Reexamining... Reevaluating... Revamping...

A critical look at your current church or future church plant

Randall J. Hillebrand

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This manual is dedicated to

Dr. Charles Svoboda

Director Emeritus and Founder of Bible Related Ministries,

a man zealous for the faith who has invested most of his life in

helping churches to be healthy, strong, growing

and dynamic!

PREFACE

History:

Shortly after becoming a Christian in 1982, it was my desire to come to the Soviet Union to work with church leaders. What is interesting to me in hindsight is that when this desire or call first developed, I was a brand new Christian who knew very little about the Bible and Christianity. Yet through the years, this desire of my heart remained. It was finally in 1994, while pastoring a church in the United States, that I made my first trip to Ukraine. During this trip, the flame in my heart for this ministry was fanned, and my desire became much stronger. This happened again on a subsequent trip to Russia and Ukraine. After these opportunities, I would on occasion sit with tears in my eyes as I looked at a map of Ukraine which hung on the wall of my church office, wondering when I would be able to move and minister there.

After arriving in Kiev with my family in 2001, my first two years were spent in full-time language study. After this I assisted Kiev Christian University for one year as the president's assistant. It was then that the foundation for Dynamic Church of Eurasia was laid, and later the first chapters of this manual were written.

Dynamic Church of Eurasia:

Dynamic Church of Eurasia (DCE) is an organization which was developed to facilitate training of church leaders in the countries of the former Soviet Union, otherwise know as Eurasia. The name of this organization reflects its desire: to see the churches of Eurasia be dynamic, healthy, strong, and growing. To accomplish this, as the logo of this organization represents, a dynamic church must be a church which has its foundation in the Word of God. Therefore, DCE was established to help church leaders transform their existing churches or start new churches which operate according to biblical principles.

This manual:

For all practical purposes, this manual is an ecclesiology. In other words, the content covers many of those issues which the Bible speaks about in reference to the church and its function. Therefore, the purpose of this manual is to assist you as you contemplate what the Scriptures teach on specific ecclesiastical matters and then determine whether your church is properly implementing and manifesting these biblical truths. This being the goal, application sections follow almost every chapter with questions designed to cause you to think about your church and how it compares to the biblical standards.

The application sections generally are divided into two sections. The first section is designed for leaders of established churches. The second section is designed for church planters and cross-cultural missionaries. The reason for the difference in questions is that these two groups are at different stages of ministry development. Whereas one group consists of leaders in established churches, the other group is starting new churches. Though the application sections have different focuses, it is my recommendation that you answer both application sections no matter what your current ministry. Doing so will prove helpful.

The application sections of this manual are for your benefit. Your answers are meant for you alone. Also realize that these sections will benefit you only to the extent to which you want them to. In other words, you can answer the questions quickly without giving them much thought and then forget about them, or not fill them out at all. Another option is that you can go before God prayerfully, seriously considering each question and taking the time necessary to honestly and thoroughly answer it. This way change will result as you apply what you have learned to your personal life and within your church. Your desire and honesty can make the difference. Therefore the value of this process and what it will produce is up to you.

This manual is not meant to be an in-depth study on any one topic. Each issue discussed is the subject of many books. Therefore I recommend that you find available resources in which you can delve even deeper into these issues, especially those which are pertinent to you and your church. Yet, though this manual is not an in-depth study of any of the topics discussed, you could still feel overwhelmed as you see all that is required in the Scriptures in regards to the local church. This is why you should prayerfully take one area at a time, work on those related issues, and then move on to the next chapter. This manual was written to be a tool to help you, not to frustrate you. Let it do just that.

Theological considerations:

The underlying theological positions of this manual are presented here in brief so you can benefit more completely from the material. They will be more fully developed in the manual's contents.

First, a developed, functioning church is not to be pastor or congregationally-led; it is to be elder-led. Elders -- of which the pastor is one -- are spiritually qualified leaders who are to oversee and shepherd the flock.

Second, though a pastor is an elder, an elder is not necessarily called of God to hold the office of a pastor; he does however assist the pastor in the shepherding function. Therefore when the pastor is discussed in this manual, for the most part, these discussions will not include the elder unless otherwise specified. Yet when elders are discussed, it is assumed that the pastor is included in the discussion.

Third, according to Scripture, deacons are not spiritual leaders though they are to be spiritual men. They are servants of the church. They like deaconesses, their female counterparts, are to serve in the church as determined by the church elders.

Fourth, pastors and evangelists are the equippers of the flock. It is their responsibility to equip the body for service.

Fifth, when the term "church planter" is used, it refers to a person who starts churches in his home country.

Sixth, when the term "cross-cultural missionary" is used, it refers to a person who starts new churches in a cross-cultural setting. Though a missionary can minister cross-culturally in his native country, a missionary's work usually takes place in another country foreign to him.

Seventh, an evangelist is a person whose work is to starts new churches, either as a church planter or as a cross-cultural missionary.

Eighth, the "church" is not a building which is equal to the Jewish temple. The church consists of believers in Jesus Christ, who individually, and as a whole, are the temple of God. God dwells in them individually and corporately. A church building is simply a place, a building. God does not dwell in this building any more or any less than He dwells in any other building. This is why the church -- believers -- can meet in any place available because God dwells in them, not in the building as He did in the temple built by King Solomon.

A charge:

Please prayerfully consider the material presented in this manual for the purpose of helping your church become a truly dynamic church. Yet expect that when you attempt to make progress, Satan will attack you from both inside and outside of your church. The greatest attack may very well come from within your own church or from other churches. Church members who do not want to personally change, who do not want their church to change, or churches who are entrenched in tradition and/or legalism will generally be those who will lead the attack. Therefore if you desire to implement biblical principles with the result of seeing your church grow and become more dynamic, healthy, and strong, you can expect such attacks. Consequently, as you step forth, do so prayerfully and carefully, yet with great expectation of what God can and will do.

Special thanks:

Special thanks are given to those who helped with this project. First I want to thank my theological proofreaders who took the time to read the more difficult articles and give insightful feedback. Thanks go to Dr. John Werner, Dr. Richard Calenberg, and Doug Britton. In addition, thanks are given to Dr. John Werner, Brian Kinzel, and Dr. Mark Saucy for their time in discussing different issues with me.

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FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES:

The Word of God in Ministry

The most powerful tool given by God to the church to affect the lives of people are the 66 books, 1,189 chapters, 31,173 verses of the Bible. Each page of the Bible is the authoritative Word of God, containing declarations which explicitly assert God as its Author. Throughout the Bible the following statements are found: “Thus says the Lord” (419 times), “God said” (46 times), “The Word of the Lord” (276 times), “The Word of God” (53 times), “God spoke” (12 times), “My Word” (56 times), “My commandment” (28 times), “My Law” (16 times), “God’s commandment” (12 times), and the “Scripture” (51 times). These 969 statements, as well as many other attestations in the Bible, should give the man of God confidence as he uses the Bible to cause the regeneration of the lost in addition to the transformation and equipping of the members of his church. As Hebrews 4:12 states, “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Therefore it is totally capable of obtaining these results.

Its importance

The importance of the Bible is seen throughout its pages. Actually its longest chapter speaks to its importance, Psalm 119. The first six verses of this psalm open with instruction which show its importance: “How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord. How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all *their* heart. They also do no unrighteousness; they walk in His ways. You have ordained Your precepts, that we should keep *them* diligently. Oh that my ways may be established to keep Your statutes! Then I shall not be ashamed when I look upon all Your commandments.” The significance of the Word of God is seen here in regards to the believer’s walk. It is the means by which he may walk in accordance with God’s desires. This is why the psalmist proclaims later in this psalm, “Therefore I love Your commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem right all *Your* precepts concerning everything, I hate every false way” (vss. 127-128). Then he says, “Your word is very pure, therefore Your servant loves it” (vs. 140).

God Himself made statements about the importance of His commandments, His Law. He said, “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deut. 6:5-9). God made it clear that His Word was so important that it needed to be integrated into every part of the believer’s life. It needed to be in his heart, the source of all he did in his life. It needed to be on his tongue, consequently teaching it diligently to his children throughout the day, from when they rose up until they laid down. God even said that His Word needed to be ever before his eyes, as if it were bound to his hand and forehead as a constant reminder of what God said. He was even to write the commandments of God on his doorposts and gates. God did not want Israel to forget, not even a single command of His.

The Law which God gave Moses was of such importance that God told Joshua before going in to take the land of Canaan, “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success” (Josh. 1:8). God equated Joshua’s success with his understanding of and constant obedience to His Word. Joshua was to think the Word of God. He was to speak the Word of God. He was to live the Word of God. Therefore if the man of God desires success in his life and ministry, he must do the same. Doing so is the key to loving the Lord his God with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might (Deut. 6:5). Why? Because his obedience to God’s Word is clearly how he shows his love to God (John 14:21-24; 1 John 5:3). It is also how He abides in Christ and Christ’s Word abides in him, resulting in the bearing of much fruit (John 15:4-7).

When Moses spoke to the Israelites about the Word of God, its importance is again seen: “All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore *to give* to your forefathers. You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord… Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him” (Deut. 8:1-3,6). Moses’ point was that God did some of the things He did in the desert to humble the Israelites so that they would understand that obedience to the Word of God was of utmost importance. It was more important than the very food they ate. Consequently God kept food from them to make them hungry, feeding them manna for the purpose of showing them what was in their hearts, which many times was disobedience. Following the Word of God, walking in His ways and fearing Him are of the greatest importance to the believer. Jesus understood this for He said to His disciples when they brought Him food to eat, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work” (John 4:34).

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus stated quite emphatically the importance of the Word of God: “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them,* he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 5:18-19). The “Law” of Moses Jesus said would be accomplished -- all of it -- down to “the smallest letter or stroke” (of a letter). He also made it clear that whoever annuls just one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be the least in the kingdom. In contrast, those who obey and teach them shall be great. So clearly God considers His Word exceedingly important, and so should all true believers. Jesus goes on, and as He concludes His sermon, He says: “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and *yet* it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.” (Mat. 7:24-27). The Word of God is a place of security, being a strong, sturdy foundation for those who hear and act upon it.

Lastly, the fact that “all Scripture is inspired by God” (2 Tim. 3:16) is further evidence of the Bible’s importance. As Peter said in 2 Peter 1:20-21, “no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” The word, “interpretation” in Greek (Gk., epiloosis) means literally unloosening or releasing. So the issue in verse 20 is not that “no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation,” but that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own “revealing,” or ”unveiling of hidden truth.” In other words, God is the revealer of prophecy, not man. This makes more sense in the context of verse 21, that “no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” In this verse Peter is stating that God is the source of prophecy, the Holy Spirit being the agent of inspiration. For it is the Holy Spirit who moved (Gk., pheromenoi; He bore or carried along) the writers of Scripture as the wind would a ship when it fills its sails and moves it. So in these two verses Peter is making it clear that God is both the Revealer and Source of prophecy. This being the case, the Scriptures are inspired, being the very words of God to man. Therefore the Scriptures are of utmost importance to mankind.

Its power

The Bible was intentional, planned and written by God in such a way that it would speak to all of the topics which God determined were necessary for man to understand. In other words, the Bible is not a haphazard collection of writings by 40 plus authors, but is a specific collection purposely written to accomplish all that it was set out to do. God said, “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:10-11).

Therefore we can be assured that it is effectual and sufficient for the task, and it has the power to accomplish all that God desires.

Not only is God's Word effectual, but it is invasive. Hebrews 4:12 explains: "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Because the Bible is alive and has this ability to invade a person, probing deep into the spiritual core of a man, it is able to judge a man's heart. In this process the Word of God is able to accurately assess the very thoughts and determine the very intentions of what a person thinks and does. Having this capability, the Bible can force a man to look inwardly at the contents of his heart, those things which defile him (Mark 7:18-23) as well as those things which commend him (cf., Luke 6:45; 8:15; 1 Cor. 4:5). This process of invading the core of a man, causing him to look intently at his thoughts and intentions through the living and effectual Word of God, can transform him (cf. Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:23) as it cleanses (Eph. 5:25-27) and sanctifies him (John 17:17). Such a process is helpful to the Bible reader if he abides by what he reads. James makes this clear when he wrote, "But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does" (Jam. 1:25). Therefore the Word of God is powerful, being able to invade, convict and change the heart of a believer.

The Word of God is also powerful in transforming the lives of unbelievers into followers of Jesus. Peter said in 1 Peter 1:22-25: "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is,* through the living and enduring word of God. For, 'All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever.' And this is the word which was preached to you." Peter makes it clear that the reason his readers were to love one another was because they were born again (born from above), this resulting from the living and enduring Word of God which transformed them. This transformation gave them the ability to be obedient to the truth of God's Word. Consequently they were able to purify their souls, this giving them the capacity to love in this way. Peter also made it clear that where the flesh of man is perishable, those who were born again of God's imperishable Word will live forever. Thus the Word of God has the power to transform lives from the perishable to the imperishable, from the unregenerate to a transformed individual.

Its necessity in ministry

One reason the Word of God is necessary for church leaders in ministry is because it reveals to us how to live and understand life from God's perspective. God said of Himself, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares 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" (Isa. 55:8-9). Understanding our personal view of life generally takes little effort, while understanding life from God's perspective can be difficult at times, uncomfortable, and stretching. It can be difficult because we have to wrestle with the deep wisdom of God, understanding it in the context of the entire Bible. It can be uncomfortable

because the Word of God is always prompting us to change to become more Christlike. This will also cause us to have to change how we understand life and the Bible which can also cause discomfort. It is stretching because as it changes us, we are no longer who we used to be, slowly being molded into a new person. Yet ultimately this process should be freeing, enlightening, and bring peace as we grow in truth, for it is the Word of God which gives clarity. As fallible human beings, we do not always understand things as God does, but the Bible helps us to see things clearly; that is if we take the time to study it, meditate upon it and ask God for understanding. Without God's Word we cannot be effective in our ministry. But with it we can penetrate the hearts of people (cf. Acts 2:37) for the Word of God is sharp and piercing, being portrayed in the Scriptures as "the sword of the Spirit." (Eph. 6:17). Ministers of the gospel need to know how to effectively yield this sword. God also describes His Word as a fire and a hammer. He said, "'Is not My word like fire?' declares the Lord, 'and like a hammer which shatters a rock?'" (Jer. 23:29). In other words God's Word is powerful, and it will accomplish His plan because His ways cannot be thwarted (Job 42:2). Such a tool is necessary for the man of God to battle against satanic forces (cf. Mat. 4:1-11) and to be able to impact the lives of people.

Another reason the Bible is necessary in ministry is because it is the very Word of God. As the Word of God, it is capable of preparing God's people for ministry which, according to Ephesians 4:11-16 is the primary goal of the pastor and evangelist (see the chapter titled, "Pastor's and Evangelist's Equipping Ministry"). Paul wrote, "all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Therefore, the pastor and evangelist who desire to have an effective force which is capable of ministering fruitfully within the church and the community where the church is located must have members who are equipped to do the work. It is the Word of God which was given to accomplish this task. It can transform the character of a Christian, giving him the wisdom and knowledge he needs, preparing him for service, and equipping him for the work God has for him to accomplish.

Jesus -- the Word of God (John 1:1-3) -- understood the power of God's Word and its necessity in our lives. This can be seen in the fact that the night in which Jesus was taken to be tried, he prayed for all of His disciples, even for you and me (cf. John 17:20). He said, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth" (John 17:17). The word "sanctify" means to purify, to separate from, to set apart. So Jesus was asking His Father to use His truth to sanctify Jesus' disciples. It is then that Jesus explicitly equates God's Word with truth. What Jesus wanted were disciples who would reflect His character, who would be holy, and who would live righteously. Jesus knew that this could only be accomplished through the Word of God, and that is why He made this request. Knowing this, the pastor and evangelist need to understand that their Bible is God's truth. It is what God has given them to use to sanctify believers; helping them grow in faith, hope and love; in their relationship with Christ; in their knowledge of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit; in the fruit of the Spirit; etc. This is the tool they have "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12). Without it they have nothing. With it they can produce mature, productive, effective disciples of Christ.

Some final reasons why the Word of God is necessary in ministry is because those who follow the Word of God will have wisdom and understanding (Psa. 111:10; 119:104,130). They will keep their way pure, and not sin against God as a result of treasuring His Word (Psalm 119:9-11). They will also have a light for their path and a lamp to their feet (Psa. 119:105) so they can see clearly the way to go. These are reasons the man of God needs to teach the Word of God to the people of God. The Apostles, understanding the importance and necessity of this ministry, gave themselves fully to this work, wanting nothing to sidetrack them (Acts 6:4). Thus it should be for church leaders today. David wrote, "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether" (Psa. 19:7-9).

Conclusion

Due to the importance of the Bible as the Word of God and because of its intrinsic power, it is vital that the church leader understand that it is his most important tool. For it has occurred that when the Bible was read from pulpits by unsaved pastors, the hearers came to faith in Christ. This is its power; consequently, it is an essential and indispensable part of the ministry of the man of God.

However, though the average church leader would agree 100% with the truths presented in this article, how often does his practice agree with his understanding? In other words, how important is the Bible in his daily life and ministry? To answer this, all one has to do is consider some of the following questions:

1. How much time does he spend reading it each day?
2. How much time does he invest each week in studying it before he preaches and teaches it?
3. How often does he carry it with him so that he has it available for potential ministry opportunities?
4. How much time does he spend memorizing it?
5. How many times has he read the entire Bible from cover to cover?
6. How well can he use the Bible in teaching, counseling, and refuting false doctrine and false teachers?
7. How much does he focus his attention on applying the Word of God to his life?

So though you may agree with the importance of, the power of, and the necessity of the Word of God in the lives of church leaders and church members, what is your reality? Remember, it was the Word of God which Paul and his companions preached, proclaiming Jesus throughout the known world, about whom the Thessalonians said, "These men who have upset the world have come here also" (Acts 17:6). You have the same authoritative Word of God at your disposal with which to use to transform people and upset the world for Jesus.

For this to happen though, we need to view the Bible as did the writers of the Bible. Job said of the words of God, "I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job

23:12). A psalmist said, “I rise before dawn and cry for help; I wait for Thy words. My eyes anticipate the night watches, that I may meditate on Thy word" (Psa. 119:147-148). If the Word of God is as important to us as it was to these men, if we understand its power and its necessity in our ministry, if we honor it through reading it daily, through our diligent study and our memorization of it, if we apply it to our lives and use it to see others transformed, then we will take it seriously and as a consequence see great results as God works through it.

The minister of the gospel needs to remember this so as not to fall prey to the plague that is ravaging portions of the church of Jesus Christ where biblically based sermons are being replaced by talks about Bible truth, or a focus on stories, personal experience, dramas, etc. The preacher of the Word needs to understand that though some of these aforementioned teaching methods can be a positive addition to a message, they are not to replace the preaching of the Word of God. Why? Because they are not the inspired Word of God, thus they fall significantly short in their potential impact in contrast to the Word of God. Though these things appeal to many, such actions eventually will hurt a church in the long run. Why? Because these methods are not what God ordained to build up believers, prepare them for ministry, give them a deep understanding of the things of God, or a solid foundation upon which to stand in their Christian faith (cf. Mat. 7:24-27; Eph. 4:11-16). God gave the Bible for this task. This is why Paul told young Pastor Timothy, “I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths” (2 Tim. 4:1-4). The minister of the Word of God needs to make sure that he too is “ready in season *and* out of season” to “reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.” This can only be done with the Bible and by its teachers who work hard at studying it, preaching and teaching it (1 Tim. 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:15). This cannot be accomplished by those who desire only to tickle men’s ears. Let’s be ministers who are men of God’s Word!

APPLICATION QUESTIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERS, CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. How important is the Bible to your ministry? As stated above, “To answer this, all one has to do is consider some of the following questions.” Please take some time to answer them now.

   a. How much time do you spend reading the Bible each day?

   b. How much time do you invest each week in studying it before you preach and teach it?

   c. How often do you carry it with you to have it available for potential ministry opportunities?

   d. How much time do you spend memorizing it?

   e. How many times have you read the entire Bible from cover to cover?

   f. How well can you use the Bible in teaching, counseling, and refuting false doctrine and false teachers?

   g. How much do you focus your attention on applying the Word of God to your life?

2. Do you need to improve in your use of the Word of God? If so, in what areas of your life and/or ministry? Please use the questions above as a guide. Write a plan for improvement in three of these areas:

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3. As a result of reading this article, what will you do differently in your church in regards to using the Bible?

FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES:

Church: Purpose of

Why it is important to understand the purpose of the church:

Understanding the purpose of any organization is important for comprehending the reason why that organization exists. This is true for the local church as well. Why does the church exist? Why did Jesus go through all that He did and die on a cross to redeem the church? Knowing the answers to these questions helps people understand the church's purpose. Understanding this will help the church be more focused on and better accomplish its task. When a church does not understand its purpose, it is impotent because it does not know why it exists; why it is doing the things it does.

The purpose of the church:

What is the purpose of the local church? In developing the purpose statement presented here, the Bible passages used speak about two issues: 1) the reason that God saved Christians, and 2) the tasks which He gave them to accomplish in the world.

The first segment of the purpose of the church gives the overall intention God has for the believer; that being God's glorification: "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). God's glorification should be the primary reason for all that the believer and the local church do; the statement, "whatever you do," being all-inclusive. Consequently when ministries are carried out (e.g., the preparation and preaching of the Word of God, worship, evangelism, member care, etc.) and people are giving of their time and money to do them, all their effort is to be done as if explicitly for God. Why? Because when one ministers for the glory of God, he should be doing his work purposely for God (Col. 3:17,23; 1 Pet. 4:11). He is not to offer a half-hearted effort, but instead 100%. Therefore the first portion of the purpose statement of the local church is: "The purpose of the local church is the glorification of God (1 Cor. 10:31)..."

Another purpose of the church is to be a stronghold of truth. The church is described by Paul as "the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). Whereas a

pillar upholds a structure, the church like a pillar is to uphold the Word of God. It is also to be the "support of the truth." In other words, in regards to God's Word, it is to be immovable, firm, and steadfast in its treatment of and conviction and adherence to the Bible. The church is never to buckle under the pressure which the world places upon it to compromise, disregard and/or abandon God's truth. Instead it is to stand strong, upholding and proclaiming the truth no matter the consequences. Even though the entire world itself were to turn away from God's Word, the church is to stand as a beacon of it! The expanded purpose statement is: "The purpose of the local church is the glorification of God (1 Cor. 10:31), through being the pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15)..."

The next segment of the church's purpose takes into account God's intention for believers in the world; that being proclamation. The truth that is to be proclaimed is twofold. The first truth is found in 1 Peter 2:9, which states: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for *God's* own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." It is the task of the believer and the church to proclaim God's excellencies (praises or virtues) to the world. This is to be done because God is worthy of praise and honor. The world needs to know about the greatness of God, for the world must believe in Him through His Son. Psalm 145 is a good example of this.

1 **"**I will extol You, my God, O King, and I will bless Your name forever and ever.
2 Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever.
3 Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable.
4 One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts.
5 On the glorious splendor of Your majesty and on Your wonderful works, I will meditate.
6 Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts, and I will tell of Your greatness.
7 They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness and will shout joyfully of Your righteousness.
8 The Lord is gracious and merciful; slow to anger and great in lovingkindness.
9 The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works.
10 All Your works shall give thanks to You, O Lord, and Your godly ones shall bless You.
11 They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom and talk of Your power;
12 To make known to the sons of men Your mighty acts and the glory of the majesty of Your kingdom.
13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion *endures* throughout all generations.
14 The Lord sustains all who fall and raises up all who are bowed down.
15 The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in due time.
16 You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.
17 The Lord is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds.
18 The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.
19 He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them.
20 The Lord keeps all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy.

21 My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, and all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever."

This is the God whom we serve. Thus one must not only proclaim the wrath and justice of God, but the many other aspects of His character as well. Therefore the expanded purpose statement is: "The purpose of the local church is the glorification of God (1 Cor. 10:31), through being the pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15), through its declaration to the nations of His excellencies (1 Pet. 2:9)…"

The second truth believers are to proclaim to the world is found in Luke 24:47, "and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." Believers and the local church are also to proclaim to the whole world that it needs to repent in Christ's name for the forgiveness of sins. This need for repentance is seen in other passages as well, such as Psalm 96:10, Matthew 28:18-20, and Acts 1:8. This is the good news that ambassadors of Christ are to communicate because God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. It is His desire that they turn from their wicked ways and repent (Ezk. 33:11; 2 Pet. 3:9). Again the purpose statement is expanded to: "The purpose of the local church is the glorification of God (1 Cor. 10:31), through being the pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15), through its declaration to the nations of His excellencies (1 Pet. 2:9) and His message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; cf. Mat. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8)…"

The last and final aspect of the purpose of the church considers why God brought salvation to all men; that they be zealous for good deeds (Titus 2:14). Therefore it is God's purpose for believers and the local church to be zealous for good deeds, doing them inside and outside of the church for all men (Gal. 6:10); good deeds which are befitting to God (cf. Col. 1:10). This is what God expects, "for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). This is why we are commanded: "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 5:16). This is our function as Jesus said in Matthew 5, that we are the salt and light of the world, and "a city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house" (vss. 13-15). Through our good works we are to make a difference, not just be hidden away so that no impact will be made through us in this dark world. Therefore, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Gal. 6:9-10).

The completed purpose statement then is:

> The purpose of the local church is the glorification of God (1 Cor. 10:31), through being the pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15), through its declaration to the nations of His excellencies (1 Pet. 2:9) and His message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; cf. Mat. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8), and through its good deeds (Titus 2:14; 3:14; Eph. 2:10; Gal. 6:10).

This is the reason why the church of Jesus Christ exists. This is to be the underlying purpose for all that the local church does. Knowing this, church leaders need to make sure that all of the ministries their church are involved in bring glory to God through declaring His excellencies, repentance from sin, and through the good deeds which its members produce. The results will be eternal when this is accomplished.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

> The purpose of the local church is the glorification of God (1 Cor. 10:31), through being the pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15), through its declaration to the nations of His excellencies (1 Pet. 2:9) and His message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; cf. Mat. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8), and through its good deeds (Titus 2:14; Eph. 2:10; Gal. 6:10).

Is your church working diligently at fulfilling this purpose statement? Please consider each portion of this purpose statement.

1. The purpose of the local church is the glorification of God (1 Cor. 10:31)

   What are ways in which local church should be glorifying God?

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   What are ways in which your church is glorifying God?

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   What are ways in which your church is not glorifying God?

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   What can your church change so that it will glorify God?

2. God is to be glorified through the church being the pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15).

Ÿ Is your church a pillar and support of the Word of God? If so, how?

Ÿ If your church is not a pillar and support of the Word o God, what can you do to change this situation?

Ÿ This truth will touch the very core of your church and its members. So how important is this truth to your church? If it is not important, what can you do to strengthen the position of the Word of God in the reality (daily lives) of your church's members?

3. God is to be glorified through the church's declaration to the nations of His excellencies (1 Pet. 2:9)

- What are some practical ways in which your church can be more involved in declaring God's excellencies (praises, virtues) to the nations?

- How are other churches that you know doing this? Are they being successful?

4. God is to be glorified through the church's declaration of His message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins to the nations (Luke 24:47; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; cf. Mat. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8)

- What are specific ways in which your church is involved in reaching the lost for Christ in your community?

- Do you have a program to train the members of your church in how to reach the lost?

- How many of your church members witness for Christ on a regular basis?
- How many times a month do you and the leaders of your church witness about Christ to the lost?
- Does your church reach out to the surrounding communities? If not, what are ways you could do this?
- Has your church sent out a cross-cultural missionary, or does it support a cross-cultural missionary in another country?
- Could your church be involved with other churches in starting a church in another community and/or sending out a missionary to another country? What steps can you take to do one or both of these things?

5. God is to be glorified through the good deeds of the church (Titus 2:14)

- Why is it important that your church and the members of your church be involved in good deeds?
- Does your church discuss ways in which it could be involved in good deeds in your community? If not, why?
- How is your church involved in good deeds in its ministry to the members of your church?
- What are some ways in which your church could be more involved in doing good deeds:
  - In your church?
  - In your community?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. What steps do you need to take to make sure that your new church will fulfill the purpose statement of the church?

2. List ideas under each phrase of the purpose statement of how your church, from its conception, will work toward fulfilling these:

   The purpose of the local church is

   - The glorification of God (1 Cor. 10:31)
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   Ÿ Through being the pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15)
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   - Through its declaration to the nations
     - Of God's excellencies (1 Pet. 2:29), and
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     - Of His message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; cf. Mat. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8), and
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   - Through its good deeds (Titus 2:14)
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3. How can this purpose statement help define why your church should exist and what your church will be characterized by?

FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES:

Church: Goals of

What goals should the church strive for?

As one thinks about the topic, goals of the church, many thoughts may come to mind. Some may think about such things as the number of people a church wants to see come to Christ in the coming year; how many small groups should be meeting each week; when the new church building will be built; how much money should be designated to support missionaries, etc. Therefore, each church will have its own set of goals depending upon its circumstances. Though many churches strive toward excellent goals such as those mentioned above, presented here is the premise that there is a biblical set of goals which are to be of primary importance above all others. Though these goals are to be fundamental to everything which the church does if it is to experience success, these goals are rarely discussed in a strategic manner in most church board meetings around the world. The question is, "How would a church determine which set of goals are of primary importance for the church to follow, and which are not?"

As one considers which goals would qualify as the primary goals of the church, some criteria should be considered. The first criterion presented to determine if a goal is a primary goal of the church or not is: Does this goal produce eternal results? In other words, when this goal is realized, or even in the process of being realized (when a long process is in view), it will have results that will be recognized in eternity. Eternal goals are of course something worthwhile for a church to strive after. A second criterion presented is that such a goal would be commanded in the Scriptures for churches to fulfill. Since obedience to the Word of God is of utmost importance, this too would make the goal worthwhile. A third criterion presented is that such a goal would be discussed in many places in the epistles, where churches would be exhorted to follow and excel in this goal. The next question is: "Are there New Testament exhortations which would fulfill these criteria, and if so, what are they?" The answer to this question is found in the book of 1 Corinthians and corroborated in other epistles.

The church's primary goals:

In the book of 1 Corinthians, it is evident that the Corinthian believers struggled with the sin of pride (cf. 1:26-31; 4:6, 18, 19; 5:2; 8:1-2). In conjunction with this, they as a church possessed all of the spiritual gifts which are given by the Holy Spirit (1:7); and for some, this added to their pride (12:21; 13:1-2; 14:4,23). Therefore the Apostle Paul needed to correct them and let them know that there were things more important in life than the spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 13:1-3; cf. 1 Sam. 15:21-23). These spiritual gifts in which the Corinthians prided themselves would one day cease (1 Cor. 13:8). But in contrast to these gifts, what wouldn't cease? What was more important and eternal? Paul clearly answers this question when he exhorts the Corinthians with these words found in 1 Corinthians 13:13: "But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love." These three aspects of the Christian faith are what Paul tells the Corinthians are the most important, and will remain, existing on into eternity (what will "abide," or stay forever in contrast to the gifts which have and will cease (vs. 8)). Faith, hope and love are also themes about which Paul speaks repeatedly to the recipients of his epistles. They are foundational to all other aspects of a believer's, or his church's faith and ministry. Therefore, whenever these three aspects of the faith are not foundational to a church's existence, then everything that such a church does will be done in the strength of their own flesh and not in the strength of the Spirit of God (cf. Rev. 2:2-5). Consequently, this is why the three primary goals that a church should focus its attention on are faith, hope and love[1].

Why are these three aspects of a believer's faith so important? In the case of love, Jesus stated when asked which is the greatest commandment in the Law: "...'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets'" (Matthew 22:37-40). From Jesus' answer, two major observations are noted. The first is that the two greatest commandments in Scripture are to love God and man. The second observation is that all of the Law of Moses (613 individual commandments) find their foundation in love. Romans 13:8-10 sums this truth up when it says: "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law. For this, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the* law." Therefore everything that a person does is to be done out of love. This is also to be the goal of our preaching and teaching. Paul makes this point in 1 Timothy 1:5: "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." What is the source of that love according to Paul? It is to come from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith. How do you as a pastor positively influence the hearts of the members of your church to be pure, resulting in a good conscience and a sincere faith? It is through your teaching and preaching ministries, for it is the Word of God which sanctifies (John 17:17; 15:3) and cleanses (Eph. 5.26; cf. Heb. 10.22),

[1]The author was first introduced to this understanding of the Scriptures through the ministry of Dr. Gene A. Getz. Though this being the case, the material on this topic results from the author's own personal study.

which is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16). Therefore love must be the foundational aspect or goal of the local church; for if it is not, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, the results of the various ministries of the church will be of no profit (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Love is of utmost importance in the local church.

The second goal of the church is to grow in faith. Hebrew 11:6 states: "And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." If a church does not function in accordance with faith, then how can that church possibly please God? It cannot and will not! God will only reward those individuals and churches who seek Him. Those who seek their own will may please themselves and others, but they definitely will not please God. Therefore the local church must do everything through faith and not the flesh, or it will not produce good and lasting fruit (Mark 4:18-19).

The third foundational goal about which Paul exhorted the church at Corinth is hope. Hebrews 6:19 says: “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a *hope* both sure and steadfast.…” Therefore hope is important in the local church because without it the church would waver. It would have no firm foundation. As a result, it would not be a pure church which would labor and strive for the gospel, being tossed to and fro because of its lack of stability. But the church whose hope is in Christ (Col. 1:27) purifies itself (1 John 3:3; cf. Titus 2:11-14) and will be useful to God (2 Tim. 2:20-22). Such a church will also be anchored (cf. Heb. 6:19), and as a result will be steadfast (Heb. 6:19; 1 Thes. 1:3) and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that their toil is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58). Even in the midst of trials (cf. 1 Thes. 1:3,6; 2 Thes. 1:4), such a church will persevere (Rom. 8:25). This stability, which is a manifestation of hope, gives the church the ability to labor and strive (1 Tim. 4:10), making an impact for Christ. Accompanying such hope is rejoicing (Rom. 12:12), and no disappointment (Rom. 5:4-5) because of Whom the church’s hope is in. This is why hope is so important and is to be a foundational goal of the church.

The importance of these goals:

As one looks at the writings of Paul, one can see Paul’s concern for how the churches he began manifested faith, hope and love. The books of 1 & 2 Thessalonians and Colossians show this point very clearly. Below is an example from 1 & 2 Thessalonians:

1 Thessalonians
- Paul remembered their faith, hope and love (1:3)
- They expressed their faith (evangelism) (1:8)
- Paul gave examples of how they expressed their faith, hope and love (1:9-10)
- Timothy was sent to strengthen them in their faith (3:2)
- Paul sent Timothy to find out about their faith (3:5)
- Timothy brought good news about their faith and love (3:6)
- Paul was comforted after hearing about their faith (3:7)

Paul wanted to complete what was lacking in their faith (3:10)
Paul wanted them to abound in their love (3:12)
They were taught by God to love one another (4:9)
Paul exhorted them to put on faith, hope and love (5:8)

2 Thessalonians
Paul commended them because their faith and love grew (1:3)
Paul spoke proudly of them to others because of their steadfastness (perseverance) and faith in persecution (1:4)
Paul prayed for their growth in love and hope (steadfastness) (3:5)

In these two short books one can see the importance of faith, hope and love by the number of times Paul mentions them (14 times in 8 chapters). One can also see their importance by Paul's concern for the manifestation of these three aspects of their faith in this church. Paul reminded them of their faith, hope and love in the past, in the present, and his desire for them to improve in these areas in the future. Then in 2 Thessalonians, it is obvious that they did make strides forward in their faith and love. Not only that, Paul spoke proudly of them because of their steadfastness (perseverance) and faith in persecution (1:4). It is interesting to note that these are the kinds of things about which the Apostle Paul boasted. Therefore faith, hope and love are measuring sticks for the health of the local church.

Seeing the importance of faith, hope and love in the life of a believer and in the life of a church, these aspects of the faith need to be a priority for discussion by church leadership. In these discussions, they need to analyze their church and its ministries to see if faith, hope and love are truly its foundational characteristics; if they are being manifested to the extent they should be, or to see if any of them are nonexistent (cf. Rev. 2:4). The church's leadership also needs to consider how the church, individuals within the church, and they themselves can work at abounding even more in their faith, hope and love. When meeting to discuss the work of the church, its leadership needs to make sure that their meetings are carried out in a spirit which expresses these characteristics, and that the decisions made reflect them as well.

In this world there are churches which are monuments to men, and there are those which are monuments to God. Those which are monuments to men are the ones that operate like corporations, where planning and scheming are done on how to build up a large church through whatever means are necessary. Those which are monuments to God are those which manifest a great faith in Him, which look forward to Christ's coming with steadfastness, and which manifest love in all that they do toward the brethren and to those outside of the church. These churches also plan, desiring to reach the lost, but they grow, not because they are doing things in their own strength and strategy, but because they are obedient to the Word of God. In their obedience, they strive to manifest to the greatest extent their faith, their hope and their love. Not only that, but these three qualities are seen in all that they do: in their evangelism, in their worship, in their service, in their care of others, etc. These are the churches which God blesses. These are the churches which make an impact for Christ. These are the churches which grow, both spiritually and numerically. Therefore the manifestation of faith, hope and love in the local church and its members should become as natural as breathing is to a living creature. May your church be such a church.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. In this section it was stated that the three main goals which the church is to strive after are faith, hope and love. Do you really believe that these are the three primary ways in which the Apostle Paul measured the health of a church? Please explain your answer.

2. Why do you see faith, hope and love as being so important to the operation of the local church?

3. Please explain why faith, hope and love are crucial to an effective outreach program to the community which surrounds your church?

4. Have you ever discussed with other church leaders how to encourage the members of your church to grow in these three areas individually? Have you discussed how your church can grow in these three areas as a whole?

5. What are some ways in which your church leaders can encourage growth in:

   - Faith

- Hope

- Love

6. What are ways in which you can grow personally in these areas?

7. Who stands out in your mind as a great (list 3 different people):

   Person of faith?
   Person of hope?
   Person of love?

8. Who do you personally know, or knew, who was a great (list 3 different people):

   Person of faith?

   Person of hope?

   Person of love?

Please list one specific aspect of their character about each of the people you listed above that makes you think this way. What can you learn from them which you can implement in your own life?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. Are faith, hope and love character qualities that are evident in your own life and family? If not, then how will you be able to teach them by example to your members and instill them in their lives?

2. How will you ensure that your new church will embody faith, hope and love from its conception? List some ideas below.

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3. What are ministries which can be started in your church and in the community in which it will be planted that will embody faith, hope and love?

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FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES:

Church: Foundational Truths About and Responsibilities of

What is a church?

In a search to define what a church is, the author came to the following conclusion after studying New Testament passages which pertain specifically to the church: A church in its most basic form is a group of born-again believers who come together for the purpose of worship and fellowship. Beyond this, the author is not convinced that a group of people must meet a list of requirements which qualifies them to be a church. On the other hand, in the New Testament, churches can be seen at various stages of development -- from those with no leaders (they had to be appointed; Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5), to those that had established leaders and were even sending out missionaries (Acts 13:1-3). A mature church: 1) will have leaders such as a pastor-teacher and/or evangelist and elders; 2) will recognize and defer to the foundational truths about the church; 3) will be involved in fulfilling the responsibilities of the church. If these three objectives are not reached, the church is not a fully mature church.

Listed below are observations made about the church as a result of this study. They have been separated into two categories, which have been designated as: "Foundation Truths" and "Responsibilities." Foundation truths are facts about the church which define and characterize it. Responsibilities on the other hand are those things which the church is supposed to be involved in doing. These are responsibilities which have a dependency upon the actions of the local church. Therefore, please consider the importance of these truths and responsibilities in relationship to your church.

Foundation Truths:

Question: How are these truths reflected in your church on a daily basis?

1. The church was purchased by Christ (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:23; 1 Pet. 1:18-19)
2. The church's foundation is Christ because He is the reason for its existence (1 Cor. 3:11)
3. The church's Chief Cornerstone is Christ (Eph. 2:20)

4. The church's foundation was laid by the apostles and prophets who were essential components (foundational) in the formation of the church (1 Cor. 3:10; Eph. 2:20)
5. The church is a holy temple made up of believers in Christ (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:21-22)
6. The church's head is Christ (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23,24; Col. 1:18)
7. The church is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12; 27; Eph. 4:16; Col. 1:24)
   a. It is composed of Christians (Acts 11:20-21,26; 14:23; 1 Cor. 1:12)
   b. It is diverse (Rom. 12:4; 1 Cor. 12:12,14-19)
   c. It is interdependent (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 20-27)
   d. It is unified (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12-13,20)
8. The church is subject to Christ (Eph. 5:24; 1:20-22; Mat. 11:27; 28:18)
9. The church is loved by Christ (Eph. 5:1-2; 25; Acts 20:28; Gal. 1:4)
10. The church is sanctified by Christ (Eph. 5:26; 1 Cor. 6:11; Titus 2:14)
11. The church is nourished and cherished by Christ (Eph. 4:16; 5:29)

The first observation that is that first and foremost the church is all about Christ. Without Him there would be no church. Believers are secondary in comparison to Him. The church is not to exist for its own will and purpose. Though believers make up the church, without Him it would have no purpose, no direction, no power and no reason for existence. As His body, the church is to carry out His will, doing His work (Eph. 2:10) His way without grumbling or complaining (Php. 2:12-16).

A second observation is that since Christ is the Head of the church, church leaders need to be in continual communication with Him, their Chief Shepherd. This they are to do through prayer and the Word of God.

A third observation is that because Christ died for the church and therefore, loves and cherishes the church, then He only has the church's best interest in mind (Rom. 8:32). This is true because the church is His body; and as His body it is His desire to nourish and cherish it, meeting its actual, though not always its perceived needs. Therefore, the church can always depend upon its Savior (Rom. 8:32), not only to meet its needs, but also to care for it as a mother would a child (cf. Mat. 23:37), or a husband would his bride (Eph. 5:28-29).

The last observation is that the church consists of believers, all of whom are an important part of the body of Christ. Since the church is diversified, it needs to work at trying to understand, appreciate and accept the differences of others (i.e., spiritual gifting, talents, life experiences, ethnic background, nationality, etc.). This is a strength of the church. It is these various members of the body of Christ that God uses to compose the body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:18,24) to make it what it is. As a result, no members have greater importance than other members of the body (1 Cor. 12:21-22), and no members are less important than the rest of the members of the body (1 Cor. 12:15-18). Being a part of the holy temple and the body of Christ, churches and individual believers are not to work together with unbelievers in the things of the Lord (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1), but only with other believers and Christian churches.

Responsibilities of:

Question: How does your church carry out these responsibilities?

1. The church is to exercise the authority which was given to it by God (Mat. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:12-13; 6:1-8; 1 Thes. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17)
2. The church is to have a pastor-teacher and/or evangelist involved in equipping its believers for ministry (Eph. 4:11-16)
3. The church is to be directed by elders (Acts 13:1; 14:23; 20:17,28; 1 Thes. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 3:1; 5:22,24-25; Titus 1:5; Jam. 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1-4)
4. The church is to be taught (Mat. 28:19-20; John 17:17; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 4:17; Col. 1:25-28; 1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 2:2; 4:2; Heb. 4:12)
5. The church is to be involved in worship (Psa. 2:11; 29:2; John 4:23-24; Php. 3:3)
6. The church is to be involved in fellowship (Pro. 27:17; Acts 2:42; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Heb. 3:13; 10:24-25; 1 John 1:3,7)
7. The church is to be involved in service (Mark 10:45; 1 Cor. 12:4-7,25; 2 Cor. 4:5; Gal. 6:9-10; Eph. 2:10; 4:11-12; 6:7; Php. 2:12-13; Heb. 12:28; 1 Pet. 4:10-11)
8. The church is to be involved in evangelism (Mat. 28:19; Acts 2:14,41; 4:4; 5:42; 6:7; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Col. 4:5-6; 1 Thes. 1:5-6; 2 Tim. 4:5)
9. The church is to be involved in sending out cross-cultural missionaries (evangelists) (Mat. 28:19; Acts 1:8; 13:1-5; Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 4:5)
10. The church is to care for its members (John 13:34-35; 1 Cor. 12:25-26; Gal.5:13; 6:2)
11. The church is to practice water baptism and communion (Mat. 28:19; Acts 2:38,41-42; 10:47-48; 1 Cor. 1:13; 11:20-32)
12. The church is to carry out church discipline (Mat. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Thes. 3:14-15; Titus 3:10-11; Heb. 12:4-11)
13. The church is to be a place of peace and order (Rom. 14:19; 1 Cor. 11:6; 14:33,40; 2 Cor. 13:11; Gal. 5:16-26; Eph. 4:1-6; Php. 2:2; 1 Thes. 1:1; 5:13)

This category of responsibilities of the church have implications in regards to the work and health of the local church. Where the foundational truths are unchangeable truths which are not contingent upon anything or anyone, the responsibilities of the church are those tasks whose fulfillment are dependent upon the actions of the local church, though their end results are determined by God. Because these responsibilities find their fulfillment in the actions of the church, it is then true that they also find their lack of fulfillment in the inactions of the local church. Therefore if a church is not actively pursuing these responsibilities, their fulfillment simply will not occur, even though they are the will of God for the local church. As you consider them and their implications, please note again that the Scripture references listed previously will not be referenced below, though their principles are stated.

The first responsibility listed is that the church is to be involved in consistently teaching and preaching the Word of God. It is from the Word of God that people are able to grow in their faith and develop more into the image of Christ. This too was the command of Christ after His resurrection; that once a person believed and was baptized, he was to be taught all that Christ commanded. This should not take place

only in the main services of the church, but also in Bible studies and discipleship groups. These are important aspects of the church's ministry.

The second responsibility is that the church is to be involved in the worship of God. This worship is key and fundamental to any church. Without this component, it has lost its focus because God is not receiving glory from His church. The worship of God should be a natural outpouring from the individual believer as well as from the church. Worship therefore must involve the whole church where all are involved individually as well as corporately. It must be a time that is meaningful to all involved, and not something that is the same week after week, after week. Therefore thought needs to be put into the planning of services, its music, its order, etc. The goal of worship should not be to produce an emotional response. Its goal should be to prepare and help people worship their great God.

The third responsibility is that the church is to be involved in fellowship. Fellowship is a relationship that exists between believers in Christ, and between them and their Heavenly Father and Savior. This fellowship is based upon the Person of Christ and the shared, common faith of believers found in God's Word. Fellowship between believers makes them stronger in their faith as they encourage one another to remain faithful to the Lord. True fellowship is not possible between believers and unbelievers, for "what partnership has righteousness and lawlessness" or "what fellowship has light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14). None!

The fourth responsibility is that the church is to be involved in service. Service is very important to the Christian life. A Christian who does not serve will be stunted in his growth. He will not develop as he should, and more importantly, he will not be following in the example of his Savior. He also will not be a good steward of the spiritual gift that was given to him at salvation. Therefore the church is to cultivate service in its members, teaching them to serve one another, so that individual believers will be able to carry out the works that God has appointed for them in eternity past.

The fifth responsibility is that the church is to be involved in evangelism. The gospel message is to sound forth from the local church -- that Christ died for the sins of the world, that He was buried, and that He rose again. Not only should the church be looking for opportunities to do this, but as the people of the church go about their daily activities, they should take every opportunity to make disciples, being involved in the process of bringing people to faith in Christ.

The sixth responsibility is that the church is to be involved in sending out cross-cultural missionaries, making disciples of all nations. Though this process is to begin with the city or village in which the church is located, it is to spread from there to the surrounding regions and to the ends of the earth. The church is to be concerned about other lands around the world, not just its own. It is to manifest this concern by sending out cross-cultural missionaries to other countries, to see converts made, and new churches started, even though its own nation has not yet been fully reached. Jesus commanded this in Matthew 28:19 and in Acts 1:8. The book of Acts is the record of the beginning of this process, which the church today is to continue.

The seventh responsibility is that the church is to be involved in the care of its members. The church is to serve and care for one another. When one member of the body suffers, the whole body is to suffer. When one member rejoices, the entire body is to rejoice. This is how all men will know who Christ's disciples are, by their love for one another. A body which does not care for itself is an unhealthy body.

The eighth responsibility is that the church is to be involved in the practice of water baptism and communion. Once a person believes and becomes a disciple of Christ, he is to be baptized in accordance with Christ's command. Also, believers are to partake of the Lord's Supper as a memorial and remembrance of Christ's death for them.

The ninth responsibility is that the church is to be involved in the practice of church discipline. God disciplines those whom He loves, and He expects the church to do the same. When a confessing believer falls into sin, he is to be approached and exhorted to turn from his sin. If he does not repent, then the process continues until he either repents or is put out of the church. The goal of this process is multifaceted: it is to be done not only for the restoration of the erring believer, but also for the glory of God, the protection, purification, unity, and testimony of the local church, as well as for the necessity of the church to be obedient to the command of Scripture.

The tenth responsibility is that a church should have a pastor-teacher and/or evangelist involved in equipping its believers for ministry. This is an important aspect of a church's ministry because the main function of a pastor-teacher and evangelist is the equipping of the saints which results in the building up of the body of Christ. Without such men, the church cannot be built up to maturity. (See the article titled, “Pastor’s and Evangelist’s Equipping Ministry”).

The eleventh responsibility is that the church is directed by elders. Elders, according to the Scriptures, are to be men, not women, who are to desire their position and who are spiritually qualified. As elders, they are in a position of responsibility of care-giving, of protection, of setting an example, and of leading the sheep, working alongside the pastor-teacher. Therefore not just any individual is to be placed in this position too quickly, but he is to be tested first and found faithful. (See the article titled, "Church Leadership Roles Defined")

The twelfth responsibility is that the church has authority that has been given to it by God. It has the authority to carry out church discipline, judge matters between believers, and its leaders have charge over the members of the church, etc. Therefore the church needs to carry out and not neglect its responsibilities or take them lightly. On the other hand, it too must make sure that it is not abusing its authority and power; lording it over those within its care, and/or teaching an unhealthy view of authority in the church. One must remember that this authority was given by God, and the church elders are the stewards of it. If they abuse their stewardship, they will one day be called to give an account. However if they are good stewards, then one day the Chief Shepherd will reward them.

The thirteenth responsibility is that the church is to be involved in maintaining peace and order. The church is to be a place that is different from the world. Such things as chaos, division, strife, jealously, anger, factions, or any other deeds of the

flesh are not to be manifested in the church. The church is a place where the fruit of the Spirit is to be evident. If this is not the case, then how can the church ever be salt and light in a dark and dying world when it is no different from the world that it is suppose to impact with the gospel? It cannot!

The church's motivation:

As one considers these observations about the church, one needs to be concerned about the fact that a church is able to do many of the right things, though at times not for the right reasons. This is why the intent (the motive for why something is done) of a person or of a church is so important. Why does one do what he does? This is what Christ will one day judge. This is the reason why it is so important that church leaders consider the inalterable and contingent realities which were briefly discussed above. A church does not want to find itself in a situation like the church of Ephesus did which was doing many of the right things, but for the wrong reasons (Rev. 2:1-7). The exhortation given to that church by Jesus was that if it did not once again do what it was doing for the right reason, then He would discontinue using it as a light in Ephesus. This is the reason churches need to consider why they do what they do. They need to make sure that they continue to abide in Christ, otherwise they can do nothing of any significance (John 15:3-5). They will become a useless, dried-up vine which is good only for the fire (John 15:6). Though this should never be the condition of any church, too many times it is, and nothing is done to change it.

The church's purpose statement:

Church leaders need to develop a short phrase or one sentence purpose statement for the church's members to memorize. Its objective is to help the people of the church remember why their church exists and it should be written as specific as possible. The church members will then know the purpose of their church, and their purpose in relationship to their church. This statement will also guide church leaders in decision making and planning as they take into account why their church exists.

The church's core values:

It is good for a church to develop a statement of its core values to help it stay on course and do those things it should be doing. This statement should contain those things which the church knows are important to its existence; such as loving the Lord their God with all their heart, soul and mind, and loving their neighbor as themselves (Mat. 22:37-39). It should not be a long document, but one that reminds the church's leaders and members of those key values which are important to them. This document should be reviewed on a regular basis by both groups to help them remember why they exist and what their tasks are.

The church's policy manual:

Another thing which can help a church keep on track is a policy manual. A policy manual is a document that states the church's understanding, general approach to, procedures, and direction of its core values, as well as other important issues. This should be a lengthy document. Since the thirteen contingent realities discussed previously are things the church should be doing, it is important to write policies for each of these issues, as well as anything else which is important to the church (e.g., duties of deacons and deaconesses, etc.). Then when questions arise on issues which the policy manual addresses, the church's position can be referenced and decisions made based upon this document.

When writing a policy manual, there are two things to remember: 1) all policies are to be based upon the Word of God; and 2) what is written is not unchangeable and can be modified in the future if necessary. A policy manual can change because it is not the Word of God, though it will contain references to the Word of God. If a policy manual is well written and biblically-based, it should not be changed on a regular basis. It should however be reviewed every few years to see whether any polices need to be updated. Take the time to write such a manual if you have not done so already as policies give a church guidance, protection and help in times of crises.

The church's constitution:

Lastly, a church constitution is a valuable document. This is because it is generally required by most governments and because it helps guide a church and keep it moving in the direction it determined when it was founded.

A church constitution is a document that contains not only the legal information about the church which may be required by a government, but other things such as (though not limited to):

- Church's name
- Church's address
- Church's affiliation (denomination, association, etc.)
- Statement of faith (doctrinal statement)
- Purpose statement
- Core values
- How the church is governed
- How leaders are chosen in the church
- How new members are accepted into the church
- Guidelines for church meetings and how often they will take place
- How church disputes will be settled
- How church discipline is to be carried out
- Procedure to hire or dismiss a pastor
- Procedure to change the constitution
- How to dissolve the church properties

This document is generally a legal document which governs the church as well as protects it from opposing parties which may desire to harm the church, or even take

control of its property and facilities. Therefore after this document is written, it should be viewed by a lawyer to make sure that it meets the necessary legal requirements of the civil government and its legal system. It, as well as the church's policy manual, should be referenced when questions arise which these documents address. Not doing so can cause ethical as well as legal problems for the church and its leaders.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. How do you as a church leader see the foundation truths listed below as important to the everyday ministry of your church? How do they or why should they make a difference to you and your church?

   - The church was purchased by Christ
   - The church's foundation is Christ
   - The church's Chief Cornerstone is Christ
   - The church's foundation was laid by the apostles and prophets
   - The church is a holy temple made up of believers in Christ
   - The church's head is Christ
   - The church is the body of Christ
     - It is composed of Christians
     - It is diverse
     - It is interdependent
     - It is unified
   - The church is subject to Christ
   - The church is loved by Christ
   - The church is sanctified by Christ
   - The church is nourished and cherished by Christ

   Please explain:

2. How do you see the inalterable realities listed above specifically manifested in your church? List general observations.

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3 When considering the contingent realities listed below, are there any which your church is not doing; or if it is, it is not doing a good job in fulfilling? Please circle those points which need improvement in your church.

- The church is to exercise the authority given to it by God
- The church is to have a pastor-teacher and/or evangelist involved in equipping its believers for ministry
- The church is to be directed by elders
- The church is to be taught
- The church is to be involved in worship
- The church is to be involved in fellowship
- The church is to be involved in service
- The church is to be involved in evangelism
- The church is to be involved in sending out missionaries
- The church is to care for its members
- The church is to practice water baptism and communion
- The church is to carry out church discipline
- The church is to be a place of peace and order

4 Please list ideas which you think your church can implement to improve in the areas which you circled above.

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NOTE: Please view the individual sections of this manual for further discussion about the items which you listed above. In each of these sections you will see more application questions.

5 If your church does not have a core value statement, please list below those core values which you believe are already central to the operation of your church. Please list with each one the Scripture references from which it was derived.

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6 When you look at this list of core values, do you see any that should not be there? Do you see some that are missing? Sometimes churches have core values which are not biblical, and are even destructive (e.g., excessive authority, women in leadership, etc.). Do you see any of these in your church?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. Have you written a church constitution? Have you looked at examples of other constitutions which are in use by other churches in the area where you will begin your new church?

2. Have you developed a list of core values which you believe are important to the success of your new church? If not, please begin to do so below. List with each one the Scripture references from which it was derived.

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3 From your core values, develop a purpose statement. Try to make it easy to remember.

4 Have you written a policy manual for your new church? The issues below are topics which you should include. Do you see the advantage of your church having such a manual?

- The church is to exercise the authority which was given to it by God
- The church is to have a pastor-teacher and/or evangelist involved in equipping its believers for ministry
- The church is to be directed by elders
- The church is to be taught
- The church is to be involved in worship
- The church is to be involved in fellowship
- The church is to be involved in service
- The church is to be involved in evangelism
- The church is to be involved in sending out missionaries
- The church is to care for its members
- The church is to practice water baptism and communion
- The church is to carry out church discipline
- The church is to be a place of peace and order

5 As you write your policy manual, who should you incorporate in the process of helping and advising you? What resources can you use for guidance?

People:

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Resources:

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FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES:

Church: Growth of

Church growth issues:

What are the key components for building a sound, strong, healthy and dynamic church? One thing they are not are gimmicks and worldly methodology. Though these things may generate an initial response, they will not have long-lasting and substantial results. Results which have positive, eternal ramifications are those produced by the Holy Spirit. This is accomplished by faith, prayer, living and ministering in accordance with the Word of God through the power and direction of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the application of the Word of God and not the wisdom of men is what God will bless.

One problem with using worldly methods in an attempt to progress the work of God is that they will produce shallow results. Another issue is that what may work in one church may not work in another. This may be true even when the churches are located in the same city, but especially when they are located in different countries. One reason for this is because each church is distinct from the next, and the people to whom each church is reaching out to are different as well (i.e., cultural, economic, racial, geographical, linguistic, environmental, etc.). In other words, their uniqueness will call for a distinct approach. This is why God organizes churches in specific locations, made up of specific leaders and believers so gifted to carry out the ministry He has for them (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-7,11, 18). They are established by a sovereign God with definite purposes and goals, uniquely designed and not composed haphazardly. (Eph. 2:10; Php. 2:12-13).

Therefore, the premise presented here is that unless the principles applied to build a church are supracultural in nature (scriptural principles; not cultural or man-based), they cannot be expected to work from place to place or to produce the building blocks necessary to construct a strong, fruitful church which will make an eternal impact for Christ.

Church growth principle:

When one understands that God is sovereign and that His Word is complete, it would then be logical to conclude that the essential information which church leaders need to know for the purpose of building a successful, dynamic church is found in the Scriptures. This conclusion is based upon the belief that God does desire His churches to be successful (cf. Mat. 28:19-20), and because of this He has supplied them with the information needed to carry out His task (Php. 4:19). If this is correct, then based upon this conclusion, here is a very simple biblical church growth principle:

> Make Christ your first love (Rev. 2:4-5), and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 3:16; cf. Acts 1:8) work hard at doing the things which the Scriptures command churches to do (cf. Acts 20:27; 1 Cor. 11:2; 14:37; Eph. 4:11-16).

What are those things which the Scriptures command churches to do? They are to love the Lord and others, be obedient to the Scriptures, and do those things which churches are suppose to do (those topics addressed in this manual; specifically see the articles titled, “Church: Foundational Truths About and Responsibilities of” and “Church: Goals of”). In other words, love Jesus and be faithful to Him and His Word.

This principle of church growth is based upon two things: the Scriptures and personal experience. In preparation for the composition of this article, the author wrote short summary statements for each chapter of the New Testament epistles (Romans through Jude). He then summarized each epistle with a short statement focusing upon its general theme (i.e., the gospel, correction, the Christian life, etc.). Having analyzed these general themes, the main issue addressed by the writers of these epistles is the Christian's walk and his character (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 2 Timothy, James, and 1 Peter). Other general themes were the gospel (Romans, Galatians), correction (1 & 2 Corinthians), church issues (1 Timothy and Titus), forgiveness (Philemon), the superiority of Christ (Hebrews), warnings (2 Peter), contrasts of righteousness and wickedness (1 John), false teachers (2 John and Jude), and faithfulness (3 John). While each epistle was written for a specific reason and for the purpose of dealing with specific needs, none of these focused on the issue of church growth. Looking at the issues which concerned the New Testament writers, church growth was not one of them. Even the topic of evangelism, though it is mentioned, is not a main theme. Although specific principles of church growth were never directly addressed by these writers, the issues they did address are essential to genuine church growth; those being the believer’s walk and character, and the function and operation of the church. These are the indirect principles of church growth. Therefore, it is the author's view that when these indirect issues are addressed in the local church (those things which a church is commanded to do), church growth will eventually take place. This happens because a church which does these things is being obedient to God, which is a manifestation of its love for Him and His Son (cf. 1 John 5:3; John 14:21). Consequently, it is these things which church leaders should occupy themselves with. When they do, God will bless that church no matter where it is located in the world; making it sound, strong, healthy, dynamic; and if He so desires, even a large church. The church which does not make Christ its first love but is busy with its own agenda, will not be blessed no matter how big it is and no matter how many things it is doing.

The second thing that this principle is based upon is the author's personal experience. During the years that he was a pastor, he pastored three churches. Two of the churches were small; and he was a part-time, interim pastor (in one church for one year and the other for only three months). In the third church, he was the full-time senior pastor for over eight years. When he began his ministry in this church, the church's attendance was averaging 100 people. The church is located in a small town in Michigan (USA) which has a population of about 300. By the time he left this church to go to Ukraine as a missionary, the average Sunday morning attendance was about 170, but was ministering to over 200 people. Currently this church's average Sunday morning attendance is between 225 to 250 people and is ministering to many more. (So that there is no misunderstanding, not all of the people who attended the church were from that town; many drove in from surrounding communities.)

More importantly though, during the time that the author was the pastor and including the pastor who followed him, the church was reaching out to the lost; people came to Christ, many were baptized, discipled, and the church increased its support of missionaries. In other words, people were growing in their faith, and the church grew both stronger and in number. For this God receives the glory. As the author later thought about his time at this church and about what he and the church did to cause this numerical growth, he could think of nothing extraordinary which was done to make this happen. But when he reflected further, he realized that they had done something. What they had done was work at making Christ their first love as they worked at being more obedient to Him and having a stronger walk with Him. By the power of the Holy Spirit, they had worked hard at doing the things which the Scriptures command them to do. As a result, God blessed them. So the author acknowledges the success of the church, not to any one particular thing or person, but to God blessing a group of people who were working at doing the things that a church should be doing.

Difficulties behind implementing the church growth principle:

Though this church growth principle may sound easy to fulfill, it is not. One reason this is true is because at times it is hard for churches to accurately assess their true condition, especially if they are a church that is slowly dying on the vine (cf. John 15:4-6). (This point can be clearly seen in Jesus' messages to the seven churches in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3, but especially concerning the church of Ephesus [Rev. 2:1-7]). This happens when churches come to a point where they think that they are doing all of the right things for all of the right reasons, but they are not. Actually, they really may not be doing all of the right things; but even if they are, they may not be doing them for all of the right reasons. They may be doing them as the result of tradition, and not as the result of a living, growing relationship with Christ. They may be doing these things out of misguided conviction, believing that what they are doing and how they are doing it is the only right way; proving their point with Bible passages which have been twisted out of context. Therefore, if they are not doing things for the right reasons, the question is: "What are their true motives; their true intent?" Are they doing them because Christ is their first love, or

for other reasons? Please remember that the church of Ephesus which Jesus spoke to in Revelation 2 was doing many of the right things (vss. 2-3,6), but they did them from the wrong motivation; Christ was no longer their first love. For a person and/or a church to ascertain the true intent of why they are doing the things they are doing can be difficult to determine at times, especially if they have been doing these things for the wrong reason for many, many years. The only way to get back on track in such a situation is to fall on one's knees and seek the wisdom and help of God (Jam. 1:5-8).

Another reason that implementing this church growth principle is not an easy thing to do is because not all of the people in the average local church want to grow in their faith or want to follow the Scriptures. This may not be just the church members, but it may include the pastor and other church leaders as well. Many times people simply do not want to change because it is too uncomfortable for them. Change takes a lot of work. The best catalyst for change can come from a person (or people) in the church who is godly and is moving forward in his faith. Such a person can motivate others to do the same through his example (cf. 1 Pet. 3:1). Hopefully this person is the pastor. If it is, then through his personal example and through his preaching and teaching ministry, he can make a great and positive impact in his church. But to be this kind of an example, he needs to model what he is preaching and teaching. If he does not, nothing positive will happen in the church because no one wants to follow a hypocrite. If he is a positive role model, then the church will become excited in what they see in his life and teaching and will want to imitate him.

Please note that generally a church will take on the personality of its pastor. If the pastor is a dictator, then the church may very well produce other dictatorial type leaders and members who are legalistic in their faith. If the pastor is passive, then the church may very well produce passive leaders and believers. If the pastor is a hypocrite, then the church may very well produce other hypocrites. But if the pastor is zealous for and loves Christ, then the church will produce leaders and believers who are zealous for and love Christ. It is up to the pastor and church leaders to decide what result they want, but what they decide will need to begin in their own hearts and in their own relationship with Christ.

As a general rule, to keep a church growing and changing it is good to have the church change its leaders on a regular basis, so that new men can come into the leadership of the church and give it fresh, new ideas to help the church grow. In most cases it is best to change pastors when the current one has lost his zeal and vision. Though this is hard for the pastor and the church, it may be exactly what the church needs in order to continue and make an impact for Christ.

If church growth was not the focus of the New Testament writers, then why are so many churches concerned about something that God is not concerned about? Get concerned about the right things, watch God work, and then be amazed.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. What category of principles does your church use to grow (cultural or supracultural)? Are they effective?

2. Do you see why it is important to make supracultural principles the foundation of your church's ministry and not cultural principles? Please explain.

3. Please give an example of a cultural principle which many churches today are using to build a big church?

4. Is it wrong to bring certain aspects of your culture into the confines of the church, evangelism, etc.? If not, then what distinction needs to be made between building a church upon cultural principles versus using cultural principles in the church?

5. Is Christ your church's first love? If so, what evidence do you see of that in your church? If Christ is not your church's first love, then what evidence do you see of that in your church?

6. According to Revelation 2:1-7, what is the result of a church where Christ is not its first love?

   - What does the phrase mean which states that Jesus "will remove your lampstand out of it place"?

- If Christ is not your church's first love, what will eventually be the result for your church?

- What must a church do, according to Revelation 2:1-7, so that this does not happen?

- What would the process be for a church to once again make Christ its first love?

- If your church needs to work on making Christ its first love again, what would be some things that you as a church leader can do within your church to make sure that Christ is its first love? Please list Bible references that confirm your thoughts (example: John 15:1-11).

7. How would you describe the personality of your church's pastor? Please list character traits (e.g., loving, stern, bold, gentle, etc.).

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   If you are not the pastor, please do the same thing for yourself:

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   How does your list compare to the list given in Galatians 5:22-23?

8. How would you describe your church's personality?

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- What characteristics of your church need to change to make it a more Christlike church? How can you begin the process of making these changes?

- Those things which a church is to work hard at doing are discussed in this manual. List some ideas of how you can use this material in your church so that your church will grow, first spiritually and then numerically.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. Supracultural principles are to be the foundation of all that a church does. Though this is true, it is important to also understand the culture in which the church is located and incorporate aspects of it into the church. How will you determine what aspects of the culture should be incorporated into your church, and which aspects should not be incorporated?

2. Making Christ your church's first love is key to its success and longevity. How will you make sure that Christ will be the first love of your church from its conception and on into the future? What can you do to make sure your church does not lose this passion and become like the church of Ephesus, doing many of the right things, but not loving Christ? Please know that implementing ritual and tradition into your church is not the answer to this question. These things generally take life from a church; and though the church is functioning and seems to be alive, the truth is, it is dead.

ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES:

Pastor's & Evangelist's Equipping Ministry

During this time, called the church age, Christ has called out for Himself men who fulfill two special offices within the church. These are the pastor-teacher and the evangelist. These men, who are His special gifts to the church (Eph. 4:8), have a very special calling. They are to equip the saints, whose ministry is to result in the building up of the body of Christ. Due to the importance of these men's roles and their ministry which enables the church to function proficiently, Ephesians 4:11-16 will be discussed in detail. This text is foundational to this topic.

In Ephesians 4:11-16 the Apostle Paul stated:

"And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, [12]for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; [13]until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. [14]As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; [15]but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, [16]from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

Please note that this material is being presented differently than the rest in this manual because the author felt that explaining it in this manner would make it easier for the reader to understand. Also note that the verses which precede this passage will be discussed first for establishing context.

Discussion of the previous context:

Ephesians 4:7-10:

> "[7]But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. [8]Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men." [9](Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? [10]He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)"

His victory over the enemy -- vss. 7-10

In verse 7, Paul talks about the gift of grace (an enablement) which Christ gives to believers through the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 27-28; Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 3:7). This grace which Christ gives is the supernatural capacity every believer needs to enable them to carry out the spiritual work (cf. Eph. 3:2,7-8; Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 15:10) which He has given them to do (cf. Eph. 2:10; Php. 2:13) in His body, the church (Eph. 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 5:22-25). Not only does Christ give each believer the gift of grace which is necessary for them, but He also gives and continues to give gifts out of His grace to the church (cf. vss. 8,11). What are these gifts? The gift of gifted men; men who are prepared by Him for specific functions and offices in the leadership of the church (cf. vss. 11-16).

In order to see this, one needs to understand verses 8-10. In verse 8 the word, "Therefore," is referring back to the gift of grace which Christ has and continues to give to believers who make up the church ("Therefore it says, 'WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.'") The fact that Christ "ascended on high" is the reason that He could lead "captive a host of captives" and give "gifts to men."

In verse 8, Paul quotes from Psalm 68:18, though this is not an identical quote. The point being made in Psalm 68 is that God is the Victor over His enemies. This is the same point being made by Paul about Christ. Where as David stated in Psalm 68 that God "received gifts among men, " Paul simply makes a new point that Christ "gave gifts to men." In referencing Psalm 68:18, Paul goes on to explain what he means that Christ ascended. He does this in verses 9 and 10, which are parenthetical; they are not a continuation of Paul's discussion, but simply a clarification of what he has already said.

In verse 9, the Greek text literally allows for three possible interpretations of the following phrase, "He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth." They are[2]:

a. That Christ descended to the earth (at His incarnation)
b. That Christ descended down into the earth (to Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:22)

[2]Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

c. That Christ descended into the earth (into His grave)

The third option is the most logical choice because it was through His death and resurrection that Christ gained His victory (cf. 1 Cor. 15:57; Rom. 6:3-7). It was after His death that He descended into the grave, then ascended out of the grave through His resurrection, eventually ascending to heaven. This is the ascension which Paul was talking about in verse 8 after all things were filled by Him (vs. 10). He was glorified, being raised to the right hand of the Father where He, His blessings and His reign will permeate to influence (fill) all things (cf. Eph. 1:23; Col. 1:18). Therefore since He descended and ascended, He could give His gifts to the church, which is why Paul made this point.

Returning to the rest of verse 8, what does it mean: "He led captive a host of captives"? One could simply say as with Psalm 68:18, Paul like David was presenting the picture of a victor. In Psalm 68, David did not explain God's leading captive His prisoners. It was simply a statement of His victory over His enemies. This could very well be Paul's point. It is also probable that in Paul's mind he was picturing the victory marches which took place in his day. When the Romans won a war, they would parade the victor -- the king or possibly the commander in charge of the army -- at the head of a parade in a chariot for all to see to honor him. Behind him on foot would follow the leaders and soldiers of the defeated army. They would follow in humiliation and submission. As they proceeded, the victor would bestow gifts upon the people, such as throwing money into the crowds.

Jesus, Paul is stating, also gave gifts to men in contrast to David's statement that God received gifts among men. The picture therefore is that of the defeated enemies of God following Christ. Furthermore, as Christ the Victor led the defeated, He also gave gifts to men in celebration of His triumph. This is the overall theme of these verses. Though this victory march is assured through the cross (cf. Php. 2:8-11; Heb. 10:11-13; 12:2), its conclusion is yet future at the great white throne judgment of Christ (cf. Rev. 20:11-15).

As a result of the victory of Christ through His death and resurrection, He was able to give "gifts to men" (vs. 8c). What are the gifts that He gives? When answering this, please remember that verses 9 and 10 are parenthetical and explain the first portion of verse 8. This being the case, the reader can read verse 8 and then skip to verse 11 for a simpler understanding of the context. When this is done, it is clear what the gifts are which Christ gave: "And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers." The gifts He gave were men whom He gifted to lay the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20), as well as those to build upon it (1 Cor. 3:9-15; 12:28; Eph. 4:11-16) and lead it (1 Pet. 5:1-4; Acts 20:28).

Discussion of the passage:

I. "And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers -- vs. 11

According to verse 11, the gifts that Jesus gave to the church were gifted men. Four types of gifted men (church leaders) are listed -- apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers. Before a discussion of these gifts from Christ, please note that in this article the positions which these men hold will be referred to as offices. This designation is preferred because these four positions in the church structure differ from other positions such as elder, deacon, deaconess, teacher, etc. These men are specifically appointed (called) of God and gifted to fulfill their specific responsibilities. For example the deacon, and his female counterpart the deaconess, are servants of the church. They are chosen by men to fulfill their positions (cf. Acts 6:3). The church elders determine their function (cf. Acts 6:2) within each local body. (See article titled, "Leadership Roles Defined," which clarifies the differences between elders, deacons and deaconesses). In the case of elders, theirs is a position to which a person aspires (1 Tim. 3:1). There is no indication in the Scriptures that such a person is called to this position; they are appointed by men (cf. Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23). The elders must be spiritually mature men (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) who are able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2), defend the flock (cf. Acts 20:28), refute false teaching (Titus 1:9), and carry out other responsibilities prescribed by the Scriptures.

Those who serve as elders, deacons and deaconesses are to be spiritually-minded people who meet scriptural qualifications (elder, 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9; deacon, 1 Tim. 3:8-10,12-13; deaconess, 1 Tim. 3:11). They are also people who have been gifted by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7,11) to carry out the roles God has for them in the body. This is true as well for the four offices listed in Ephesians 4:11. Those who fulfill these offices are men whom the Holy Spirit has gifted to carry out these special roles within the church. In their role, these men are also elders (cf. 1 Pet. 5:1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1) who hold a specific office within the sphere of the elders, having a specific call of God on their lives. This can be concluded from this passage because they are special gifts prepared for and given to the church by Jesus. Therefore they are obviously chosen or called by Christ. This is seen specifically in references pertaining to the lives of the apostles (cf. Gal. 1:15; Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 15:8 and Acts 9:3-6,15; Mark 3:14-19).

1. Apostles

An apostle (a special messenger) was an individual who was chosen by God to carry out various foundational tasks within the church. Looking at this word in the Bible, one sees two groups designated by this name -- The Twelve Apostles and others who were called apostles. The Apostles were made up of the original twelve (cf. Mat. 10:2-4), though after the cross Judas Iscariot was no longer numbered with them (cf. Acts 1:2). He was replaced by Matthias (cf. Acts 1:26; 2:42-43). The Apostle Paul was also this type of apostle (cf. 1 Cor. 1:1; 4:9; 9:1-5; 2 Cor. 11:5; Gal. 1:1,17), though he was not numbered with the twelve. The other apostles, those sent ones who were special ambassadors not numbered with the twelve and Paul, were

Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Andronicus and Junias (Rom. 16:7), Titus, other unnamed men (2 Cor. 8:23), and Epaphroditus (Php. 2:25).[3]

Characteristics common to the Apostles are that they:

1. Had seen the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 9:1; Heb. 2:3-4; 1 John 1:1)
2. Were chosen by Him for their offices (Luke 6:13; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 4:11; cf. Acts 1:20-2:14)
3. Were confirmed by God in their work (cf. 1 Cor. 9:2; 2 Cor. 3:1-3; 12:12)
4. Had great authority (cf. Matt. 16:19; 2 Cor. 13:10; 1 Thes. 2:6; 2 Pet. 3:2)
5. Were able to do signs, wonders and miracles (cf. Acts 2:43; 2 Cor. 12:12; 1 Cor. 14:18)
6. Helped lay the foundation of the church (cf. Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:10-11)

In this verse (vs. 11), the author believes the Apostles were in view, for they were listed first in prominence (cf. 1 Cor. 12:28) with the other gifts given to the Church by Christ. They were also foundational to the church in their ministry of establishing it, and some of them through writing the majority of the New Testament (cf. Acts 2; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Cor. 3:10-11; 2 Pet. 3:14-16).

2. Prophets

In both the Old and New Testament times there were prophets (men: cf. 1 Sam. 3:20; Acts 15:32) and prophetesses (women: cf. Exo. 15:20; Jud. 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Luke 2:36; Acts 21:9). All indications are that the prophets played the major role in both time periods since the Scriptures say very little about the role of prophetesses. Though a prophetess would have prophesied the Word of God, there was a prohibition in the Scriptures for her teaching the Word of God to men or in public assemblies where men were present (cf. 1 Tim. 2:11-12; 1 Cor. 14:34-35). Therefore prophets are the ones in view in this passage.

The role of the prophet was that he both prophesied the Word of God (cf. Acts 11:27-28; 21:9-11; 1 Cor. 14:29) -- giving special revelation -- as well as taught the Word of God (cf. Acts 15:32). Prophets also helped lay the foundation of the church alongside the apostles (cf. Eph. 2:20; Acts 13:1).

3. Evangelists

In the Scriptures there was only one individual who was specifically called an evangelist; Philip (Acts 21:8). Philip was one of the first deacons chosen in Acts 6. Timothy was told by the Apostle Paul to do the work of an evangelist in 2 Timothy 4:5, though it does not say that he himself was an evangelist; he was a pastor. These are the only three passages (including Eph. 4:11) where this term is mentioned in the Bible. Therefore it is somewhat difficult to define precisely the work of an evangelist.

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[3] Some versions translate the word "apostles" as "messengers." See the NASB, 2 Corinthians 8:23 and Philippians 2:25.

The word "evangelist," by definition, defines this person's function. He is a person who takes the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who know Him not. But was the goal of an evangelist to simply bring people into a personal relationship with Christ, or was it more than that? Due to the fact that the Scriptures do not specify the actual duties of an evangelist, this means that the Bible student needs to look at this office from a broader perspective than just these three passages.

In defining the work of an evangelist, please note that there is no spiritual gift of evangelism listed in the Bible (just as there is no spiritual gift of apostle). The evangelist then is a person who is gifted (i.e., teaching and/or exhortation and/or administration, etc.) and set apart by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of sowing the gospel and harvesting souls. He also holds the office of an evangelist (just as the Apostles were so gifted to do their work and hold their office). Since this position is a church office, it is to be held by a man and not a woman (as with the other three offices). In addition, Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20, "to go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing... and teaching them...." It is the evangelist's responsibility to do this as well (as it is for all believers). As one looks to the book of Acts, this commission of Jesus is clarified (cf. Acts 1:8); His mandate was carried out as people preached the Word of God in Jerusalem and beyond, resulting in churches being established (cf. Acts 2:14,37-38,42; 8:1; 11:19-26; Acts 13-28). Therefore from this picture, it is the author's understanding that the evangelist's work is not only bringing people into a relationship with Christ (cf. Acts 8:26-40), but actually that of starting new churches (which the Scriptures seem to indicate was the work of Philip; Acts 8:5-8,12). Although it is not stated in the Bible that the Apostle Paul was an evangelist, he surely did the work of an evangelist, resulting in the planting of many churches during the time of his three recorded missionary journeys (cf. Acts 13-20). Many people today seem to envision an evangelist as a person who goes from place to place holding evangelistic crusades. Though this could be one aspect of his work, it seems that a true evangelist was and is a church planter, either in his country or cross-culturally as a missionary. This is an important distinction to make because though the leading of a soul to Christ is wonderful, it is tragic when the new babe in Christ is abandoned and not brought into a church to be nurtured and cared for. What good parents would not give such basic and necessary care for their natural children? Therefore this should be done for one's spiritual children as well. For the evangelist whose regular practice is to go from place to place preaching Christ without follow-up for the new believers is in a sense irresponsible. This was not the practice of the Apostle Paul (cf. Acts 14:21-23; 15:36,41; 18:23; 1 Cor. 4:18; Php. 1:26; 1 Thes. 3:2-4; Titus 1:5), though the author realizes that this is not always possible in every case (cf. Acts 8:26-40).

4. Pastor-teachers

Pastor-teachers are individuals whose main function is to care for the body of Jesus Christ; the church. They do this through overseeing, shepherding (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2-3) and teaching believers the things of Christ (cf. Matt. 28:20; 1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9).

Though most translations of Ephesians 4:11 render the words “pastors and teachers,” as two separate offices, it is probably better to understand them together as one and the same. Thus this person is a “pastor-teacher.” This becomes more evident as one looks at the Greek word construction. Doing so shows that Paul actually did group these two words together, something he did not do with the preceding offices. In explanation, Paul used the construction "tous de" (some as) in the case of the first three offices. In other words, Paul said that God gave ”apostles,” “some as (tous de) prophets,” “some as (tous de) evangelists,” “some as (tous de) pastors and (kia) teachers.” He did not say that He gave "some as (tous de) pastors and some as (tous de) teachers.” Paul used a different conjunction for the phrase, "pastors and teachers." He used the Greek word "kia," which means "and." Therefore in the case of the office of pastor, the indication is that Paul was coupling the responsibilities of this position together with the spiritual gift of teaching.

As was stated earlier, this is important because the pastor-teacher should be able to not only pastor the flock which God has allotted to his charge, but be able to teach them as well, as the following verses of Ephesians 4 will show. Therefore, within the local church the pastor-teacher is an elder of the church, yet he is the teaching elder who has been specifically called and gifted for both aspects of this office. If he is not capable of doing one or the other, then he may simply be inexperienced, having not yet developed his gifts to that point, or he is not called and gifted to hold this office within the church.

NOTE:

Without spending too much time in this article to make a scriptural defense, the author will simply state that the offices of apostle and prophet are no longer functioning today. These two offices were foundational and necessary to the origin of the church (Eph. 2:19-20), but due to the completion of the New Testament and the church's foundation already being laid (cf. 1 Cor. 3:9-11), these offices are no longer necessary today. Yet the offices of evangelist and pastor-teacher are still functioning and necessary today because they are offices which equip and mobilize the church. These two offices continue what was started almost 2,000 years ago.

II. "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ" -- vs. 12

This next phrase, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service," looks back to the previous context. This phrase begins to explain the first part of the main purpose that the gifted men were given by Christ to the church.

This passage states that an important aspect of the work of the men in these four offices was "the equipping of the saints for the work of service." The word "equipping" has the idea of preparing and completing a person, having the goal of transforming him into what he should be. In the case of a believer, what he should be is a person who is able to do the “work of service.” Therefore these church leaders listed in verse 11 were given the job of ministering to the saints,

not only in their function as an apostle, prophet, evangelist or pastor-teacher, but also with the goal of teaching and training them so that they would be capable of carrying out their function in the body of Christ.

In the epistles, various gifts of the Holy Spirit are listed (1 Cor. 12:28-29; Rom. 12:4-8). Some of them are supernatural sign gifts which were distributed by the Holy Spirit during the first century of the church's history. Other gifts the Holy Spirit still gives to believers at salvation (1 Cor. 12:7,11,13). It is the responsibility of the pastor-teacher and evangelist today to help train each believer to use his spiritual gift(s) in the service of Christ and in His body the church. The goal and end result of this work Paul said was, "to the building up of the body of Christ." Therefore Paul was envisioning a church which would be a strong, useful structure, or body. In the epistles, three aspects of this truth are presented. They are:

1. The body of Christ is a spiritual building with a foundation and a cornerstone which is Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 3:9-11; Eph. 2:19-20; 4:16a; 1 Pet. 2:4-8)
2. The body of Christ consisting of individual believers built upon Christ its foundation, is a living, growing organism (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-15; Eph. 2:21-22; 4:16b)
3. The body of Christ which is a living, growing organism, is to be strengthened (edified) and built up in the faith through encouragement and discipline (cf. Rom. 14:19; 2 Cor. 12:19; 13:9-10; Eph. 4:16c; 1 Thes. 5:11; Heb. 3:13; Jude 20)

All three aspects are implied in this verse (vs. 12), though they are more clearly stated in verse 16 of this passage ("body," "fitted and held together," "by what every joint supplies").

It is the task of these gifted men to build upon the foundation which is Christ, equipping the body so that together it will work in the construction and strengthening of itself. This is primarily done through the ministries of:

1. The Word of God (cf. 1 Cor. 14:3,5,26; John 17:17; Acts 20:32; Heb. 4:12)
2. Prayer (cf. 2 Cor. 1:11; 13:9; Eph. 1:18; Col. 1:9; 4;12)
3. Our spoken word (cf. Eph. 4:29; Col. 3:16; 1 Thes. 5:11)
4. Our actions toward (service to) individuals (cf. Rom. 14:19; 15:12; 1 Cor. 14:12; Jude 20)

These four ministries are necessary to equip and build up the body, which will eventually produce believers who are unified in the faith, knowledgeable of the Son of God, and mature. Paul describes this in the following verses (vss. 13-16):

III. "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." -- vs. 13

Stated in this verse is the goal which can be reached when the pastor-teacher and evangelist are involved in the "equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." This goal will not be reached "until...all [believers] attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ."

The first thing one needs to note in this verse is the word "until." This word denotes a process as well as a conclusion. The goal which the gifted men are to work toward will continue throughout their entire ministry. Actually, this goal will never be completely realized in this life. Its conclusion will only be achieved when the church is in heaven around the throne of Christ.

One also needs to take note of the word "all." This word states that the goal includes “all" believers, not just some. Thus the focus of those in these offices is not just upon individuals, but upon the church as a whole.

What are believers and the church as a whole to attain? Paul listed three aspects of this goal, each being introduced by the preposition "to (Gk.: eis)":

a. "To the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God"
b. "To a mature man"
c. "To the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ"

Paul tied together the "unity of the faith" and "the knowledge of the Son of God." He did this because these two are dependent upon one another. In other words, an individual, or a church for that matter, cannot attain to the unity of the faith without also attaining to the knowledge of the Son of God (cf. John 16:3; 17:3,25,26; Col. 2:2). Therefore as one attains to the knowledge of the Son of God -- if this knowledge is applied to his life (this is implied, cf. Jam. 1:21-25), he will also attain to the unity of the faith. This is true because knowledge of Christ and His teaching applied will cause a person to mature, which will result in unity (cf. Eph. 4:1-3). This is one reason why the gifted men of the church are to teach those who have been allotted to their charge, so that there will be knowledge and unity.

The second aspect of this goal is that the church is to attain to the level of a mature man. In other words, as saints are equipped and built up, individual believers and the body as a whole will mature. This is why the gifted men are to proclaim Christ and admonish (warn, exhort) those allotted to their charge. Paul states this fact in Colossians 1:28. There he said:

> "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ." This is again based upon knowledge of the Word of God, because without it, believers will be babes in their thinking and not mature men (cf. Heb. 5:12-6:2).

The last aspect of this goal is that we are to attain "to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." It is to the "measure" (the fullest extent) "of the stature" (of that which is possible) "which belongs to the fullness of

Christ" (of His complete filling) to which we are to attain (cf. Eph. 3:19). Therefore, the "fullness of Christ" is the standard of measure. "To the measure of the stature" is the degree to which we are to attain the "fullness of Christ." Since "the stature" is the greatest possible amount of the "fullness of Christ" to which a person can attain, it is to that measure we are to be filled with Him. Therefore the goal of the gifted men in the church is to equip and build up the body to the point where they attain to a complete filling of Christ to the fullest extent possible which will be evidenced by His manifestation in their lives. In other words, they will be Christlike.

IV. "As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." -- vss. 14-16

Verses 14 through 16 list the results of a church which has been equipped and built up, making it a body that is: 1) unified through the knowledge of Christ; 2) mature; and 3) living Christlike. The result is that the believers of such a church will:

a. "No longer to be children tossed here and there by waves and carried about:

1. By every wind of doctrine
2. By the trickery of men
3. By craftiness in deceitful scheming" (vs. 14)

The first result listed is that mature believers will no longer be like children who are "tossed here and there" (swung around until they are dizzy) as a result of false teachers and their doctrines. In other words, they will not be easily moved and persuaded by every false doctrine that comes their way, by the "trickery" (lit., dice playing) of men who bring their false doctrines, along with their cleverness and skillful cunning in deception. They instead will be mature men and women who, according to Hebrews 5:12-14, will "have their senses trained to discern good and evil," and no longer be infants who are "not accustomed to the word of righteousness."

b. "But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." (vss. 15-16)

The second result listed is that the body, as a result of the grace which Christ gives (cf. vs. 7), will itself work together in such a way as to further grow and build itself up.

The phrase, "but speaking the truth in love," is in contrast to that which the false teachers did. They taught false doctrines to the church causing upheaval and a breaking down of the body. But Paul stated that the truth, when it is spoken and lived out in love (the word "speaking" has the idea of both the believer's words and deeds), will positively impact the body of Christ causing it to "grow up in all *aspects* into" Him who is the head of the body, the church. This is true because things done in love, in accordance with 1 Corinthians 13, are done for the edification of others (cf. Rom. 15:2; 1 Cor. 14:3,12,26; Eph. 4:29); in this case for the edification of the body of Christ. Also the idea of the phrase, "into Him who is the head," is that the believer is to grow up "into" (the likeness of) Christ -- all aspects of Him and His character -- becoming more like Him. Therefore this is the goal, but a result as well.

Paul further stated in verse 16 that from Christ (context from verse 15) "from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." Therefore Christ -- the Head -- is the source of His abundant grace (vs. 7; cf. 2 Cor. 9:8) which He supplies to His body, giving it the ability to function (cf. John 15:4-5; Eph. 3:7; Col. 2:19). It is Him "from whom the whole body" is "being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies." This parallel thought is seen in Colossians 2:19 which states, "...from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God."

Verse 16 states another important aspect of this truth; the individual members of the body also have a function in this process. The result of the distribution of Christ's grace is not only dependent upon Christ Himself, but upon each member of the body as well. This is the case because the distribution of the grace supplied depends on, or is "according to the proper working of each individual part." In other words, each member (individual person and/or church) needs to do his part in the body of Christ so that the grace of Christ will flow through His body to have its maximum potential and desired result. As this occurs (as the last phrase of this passage states), this " The grace Christ supplies, in conjunction with the proper working of the body, will cause the body to grow; and through the expression of its love, will work together and build itself up. Christ is both the goal and the source.

NOTE: The New International Version renders a better and easier translation of verses 15 and 16: "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

From this passage, it is clear that the pastor-teacher and evangelist have very special offices in the body of Christ. This is also why it is so important that they carry out their responsibilities of equipping and do it well. If they do not do it well, then the body of Christ will be negatively impacted because the body will not be built up. As a result, believers will not be maturing in their faith. But, if they do it to the best of

their ability, then the body of Christ will make an impact for which its members, along with its pastor-teacher and evangelist, will be rewarded.

Practical issues related to the pastor-teacher/evangelist:

The pastor-teacher, who is the leading elder, is in a special situation. He is the teaching elder because he has been called by Christ and gifted by the Holy Spirit for this office. Also, he usually has more biblical education than the other elders. Because he is generally the one whom most look to for leadership and guidance, much of the responsibilities fall upon him. Below are some thoughts which pertain to the pastor, the evangelist, and their work.

Though the pastor/evangelist usually bears the burden of the majority of the responsibilities in the church, it is his duty to train up others to work alongside him in the ministry (Eph. 4:11-12; 2 Tim. 2:2). The wise pastor/evangelist will work with and train his elders to be responsible for areas in the church which need oversight. This would require the pastor/evangelist to delegate areas of responsibility to the other elders, who are gifted to carry out such responsibilities. He may designate elders to be responsible for things such as:

1. Worship
2. Evangelism/missions
3. Discipleship
4. Finances
5. Church upkeep
6. Visitation
7. Fellowship
8. Counseling

By doing this, it will alleviate his workload and enable the body of Christ to use its gifts and talents which God has given it for the work of service (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7,11,14-30). It will also give him more time to focus his attention on his main areas of ministry. (See the article titled, "Church Organization"). It is the pastor/evangelist's job to share authority and responsibility and not lord it over those under his care (1 Pet. 5:3; Mark 10:42-45). It is also the pastor/evangelist's job to do the work in the church that no one else is capable of doing (e.g., preaching, teaching, counseling, leading, etc.). It is not his job to do the work that no one else will do. If believers in the church can do something, then they should be given the opportunity to do so. They are to use their spiritual gifts for which they will be rewarded. If the pastor/evangelist does the things which they can do, he will not be enabling them to serve God as they should. He will be preventing them from using the spiritual gifts which the Holy Spirit has given them at salvation (1 Cor. 12:7,11,13) for the purpose of service (1 Cor. 12:4-7). He will be stealing opportunities for ministry from them, as well as the related blessings of seeing God work in and through them. If on the other hand, people in the church are capable of doing things and yet do not want to do them, then the pastor/evangelist may have to find others to do this work, do it himself, or simply leave it undone until God raises up someone else to do it. The author believes that this last option is not often followed for many times the pastor/evangelist or his wife do the work themselves. At times this may be necessary. But if he cannot find a willing individual, it may be better to leave the job undone until someone in the church volunteers. Having just anyone fulfill a need may cause more problems than leaving the position unfilled if the person chosen is not qualified.

Another option for fulfilling positions in the church is to train and prepare people who are gifted to do the ministry, but who are unsure of doing it. At times a person may not always see his potential or may be afraid to take on new responsibility. This is where the pastor/evangelist's job as an equipper is important (Eph. 4:11-12). He is to help this individual see his or her potential and help them transition to new and maybe greater responsibility. As one author stated, "It is the pastor's job to cause pain" (author unknown). He then explained that the pastor is to cause just enough pain so that people will grow in their faith, but not so much pain they recoil from the pastor and/or the church. This is so true. It is the pastor/evangelist's job to help people make uncomfortable decisions which will help them move out of their comfort zone, thus growing in their faith. These people need to learn to trust more and more in Jesus and His Holy Spirit and less and less in themselves and their own abilities (cf. John 15:5). They need to learn to "walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7), which is difficult and uncomfortable for all believers. So as the pastor/evangelist recommends ministry opportunities for a person to be involved in which will help stretch him spiritually, he also needs to be willing to enable him to make that transition. In so doing, he needs to be sure that he does not cause so much pain that they no longer desire to do any ministry or even leave the church. As the pastor/evangelist sees areas of ministry which need to be fulfilled in the church, he is to assist members in transitioning into their new areas of responsibility. This is an important area of his ministry -- equipping the body.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. As the pastor-teacher or evangelist of your church, do you understand the importance of your office in the church of God? Do you also understand that with this office comes great responsibility? Please record your thoughts below.

2. What fruit do you see resulting from your current ministry? Is it producing mature believers who are growing in their faith and in the knowledge of Christ; believers who no longer are being tossed here and there by every wind of doctrine? Or is it producing immature Christians who bear very little fruit themselves? Share your honest thoughts below.

3. List below the ministries you are involved in. Next to each ministry explain how it is helpful in equipping people. If it is not helpful in equipping people, then check the box to the left of it. If it is helpful in equipping people, then rate its effectiveness on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = not effective, 10 = very effective).

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Those ministries which you checked that do not help equip believers, are they necessary for you to do? Are there other people who can do these things so that you can spend your time more profitably?

4. Below list the ministries which you listed under question number 3 that you gave a rating of 6 or less. Next to that ministry state one of the following options:

    a. I should discontinue this ministry (it is not effective)
    b. I need to change how I do this ministry (to make it more effective)
    c. I should ask someone else to do this ministry (maybe you do not have the time to do it well or are not gifted in doing it)
    d. I should seek help from someone who is proficient in this ministry (getting direction and/or training from someone who has more experience than you)

    Then under the option you chose, write the next step you need to take or who you need to contact for help.

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5. What things are you not doing which you should be doing to better believers in your church?

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6. How do you plan to incorporate these things which you are not doing into your current ministry? Do you need assistance in doing this? If so, whom could you contact to help you?

7. As a pastor-teacher or evangelist, you have been called by God to a very special office, just as the apostles and prophets of old were. Knowing this, describe what your attitude should be from the perspective of these passages: John 13:3-5,12-16, Mark 10:45 and Philippians 2:3-8.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. God's call of a person as an evangelist (cross-cultural missionary or church planter) is a specific call. What have you or others seen in your life that confirms this calling?

2. When a church planter or cross-cultural missionary begins a new church, he needs to be involved in many different ministries to help the church get started. List below those ministries in which you will ultimately need to spend the majority of your time in once the church is established and growing. Next, write how you will transition from the many ministries in which you are involved to the few God has called you to do to equip the body of your church.

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YOUR PLAN:

3. As you begin your equipping ministry, what key positions will you need to train people to fulfill first?

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Why did you choose these positions?

4. As you begin your equipping ministry, what key areas (topics) should you teach to the new believers in your church?

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Why did you choose these topics? Why are they strategic?

5. Why is it so important to start your equipping ministry from the very beginning of your church plant?

ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES:

Church Leadership Roles Defined

Introduction:

In the church, God has designated specific positions of service. A proper understanding of these positions helps church leaders better understand how the church is to correctly function. This is important because different perspectives on this topic, when put into practice, produce different effects within the church. This is why it is vital to understand the New Testament model; the goal of this article.

In the New Testament church, there are seven designated service roles given: apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor-teacher, elder, deacon and deaconess. Even though the last two listed (deacon and deaconess) are generally viewed as servant roles, any true New Testament leader is to be a servant (John 13:12-17). In this article, the focus will be on the servant roles of elder, deacon and deaconess; but not on the offices of apostle, prophet, evangelist and pastor-teacher. Those four offices are discussed in the article titled, "Pastor's and Evangelist's Equipping Ministry."

Within Christendom, the terms of elder and deacon are used differently depending on how a pastor, church board, or denomination understands their usage in the New Testament. Some would define an elder as the church's pastor and the deacons as spiritual leaders who work alongside the pastor. Those who hold this view generally have an elevated view of the pastor; that he, being the main spiritual leader, is above all others in his church. Others see the elders as a group of spiritual leaders who guide the church, the pastor simply being one of this group. This view of Scripture would see the deacons and deaconesses as appointed servants of the church, not as spiritual leaders, but ones who receive their direction from the elders.

The elder and his function:

The role of the elder is threefold: he is an elder, an overseer, and a shepherd. This association is seen the clearest in Acts 20. It is recorded in this passage that as the Apostle Paul was journeying to Jerusalem, he stopped in Miletus. While he was

there, he summoned the elders of the church in Ephesus. As Paul talked with them, he used these three terms to describe their role and function in the body of Christ.

The elders' function which Paul first referred to in this passage was their role as elders (vs. 17). It says in verse 17: "From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church." In the Old Testament the term "elder" (in Russian "старейшина" is similar in function to the NT elder "пресвитер") generally refers to a respected (cf. Gen. 50:7) or influential (cf. Exo. 3:16,18) leader (Exo. 3:16,18; 24:9; Num. 11:16) of the nation of Israel, but in this context it refers to those who are spiritually mature; not a new convert (1 Tim. 3:6; cf. 5:22). Therefore an elder is to be a person who manifests impeccable character, moderation, restraint, self-control, spiritual insight and wisdom. These are the spiritual requirements of a mature believer found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. An elder must be a person who is grounded in his faith and walk with Christ.

Paul also referred to the elders of Ephesus as overseers (vs. 28). Paul told the Ephesian elders: "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers..." Therefore, overseers are those who watch over ("exercising oversight... voluntarily... and with eagerness," 1 Pet. 5:2) and have charge over the people and affairs of the church ("have charge over you in the Lord," 1 Thes. 5:12; "not lording it over those allotted to your charge," 1 Pet. 5:3). The Greek word used in this passage for "overseer" is the same word used in 1 Timothy 3:1, translated as "bishop" in some versions (Gk., "episkopos"). Therefore a "bishop" in the New Testament is an elder of a church who oversees (manages) the church. He is not a pastor who oversees many pastors and their churches.

The third designation for an elder is that of a shepherd (vs. 28). Paul further told the elders in Acts 20:28: "...to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Therefore, elders are to shepherd the flock which they oversee. This aspect of the elders' work refers to their care for the people of the church through loving, guiding, directing, correcting, reproving and protecting the flock (cf. Isa. 40:11; Ezk. 34:2,4; Mat. 20:25-26; Luke 22:24-27; John 21:15-17; 2 Tim. 4:2; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:2,4). In a sense, these elders were under-shepherds who will give an account to the Chief Shepherd when He appears (1 Pet. 5:4).

Why a plurality of elders?

The overwhelming evidence in the Scriptures is that within an established local church there is a plurality of elders and not just one elder, the pastor. The elders are men who oversee and shepherd alongside the pastor; he too being an elder, but the leading elder due to his gifting and special call of God (cf. Eph. 4:11). It is to be a joint effort. The scriptural evidence which indicates this begins in the Old Testament where it is clear that a plurality of elders led the nation of Israel (cf. Exo. 3:16; Lev. 4:15; Num. 11:16; Mat. 21:23). This is also a model which the Bible ends with in the book of Revelation, for in heaven there too is a plurality of elders (cf. Rev. 4:4,10; 5:6; 19:4). It is not surprising then to see this pattern repeated in the New Testament. There one sees many references to this fact. For instance, in Acts 14:23 as Paul concluded his first missionary journey, he "appointed elders for them in every church." He did not appoint one elder for each church, but a plurality. The church in Jerusalem was also led by a plurality of elders (cf. Acts 15:22; 16:4). Also,

when Paul was in "Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church" (Acts 20:17). It was the job given to Titus by Paul to "appoint elders in every city" as he had directed him (Titus 1:5). James wrote to his readers that if anyone was sick, then he must "call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (Jam. 5:14). When Paul wrote to the church of Philippi, he addressed the letter "to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons" (Php. 1:1). Also, the writer of Hebrews told his readers that they were to obey their elders (Heb. 13:17), and Paul told the Thessalonicans to appreciate their elders and to highly esteem them in love because they have charge over them (1 Thes. 5:12-13). Therefore, throughout the Bible, from cover to cover, a plurality of elders is evident. This is why in the church there is to be more than just one elder who is involved in the oversight and shepherding of the church.

Why is a plurality of elders a better system than the appointment of just one spiritual leader over a church? Because, as King Solomon stated in the book of Proverbs, the counsel of many is helpful and necessary (cf. Pro. 1:5; Pro. 12:5,15; 13:10; 19:20; 27:9). When those giving counsel are godly believers, this is especially beneficial. When one man leads a church without the counsel of others, he is more prone to make decisions which are not as inclusive as they might otherwise be if others participated in the process. This is true because a single man left by himself is limited in his knowledge and perspective, no matter how great and godly he is. Left alone he is capable of making decisions which are not always correct and optimal in each and every situation. Therefore he will eventually make wrong decisions, some which might even have devastating effects. All one has to do to confirm this is true is to consider the consequences of great men who, when they were not thinking clearly, made terrible decisions. Many had devastating effects, such as Adam (Gen. 3:6), Abraham (Gen. 16:1-4), Moses (Num. 20:8-11), David (2 Sam. 24:1-4,10, when he did not listen to Joab's counsel), Solomon (1 Kings 11:1-6), and Peter (Gal. 2:11-14) to name just a few. Also when taking into account that power, position, fame, money, possessions, etc., can entice and corrupt (cf. 1 Tim. 6:9-11; 2 Pet. 5:2), then everyone needs to be careful (cf. 1 Cor. 10:12) and accountable to their peers (cf. 2 Cor 8:16-21). When a godly pastor takes into account the knowledge, wisdom, and counsel of the other godly elders of his church, together they will consistently come to better conclusions on issues than if he alone makes all the decisions. This is the result because represented collectively within such a group of men are various spiritual gifts, life experiences, knowledge, talents, abilities and backgrounds (family, cultural, geographical, racial, economic, social, religious). This unique combination of attributes, along with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, can help a plurality of elders see various situations from various perspectives. Their potential to understand and deal with a situation in the best possible way is far greater than the combined attributes of just one man. As a group, they are better equipped to make decisions that are thoroughly discussed and thought through, looking at the issues from many different perspectives. But when only one man is making all of the decisions on his own, he may see things only through his own, limited perspective. This can result in skewed decisions which are the result of a skewed perspective. This is the reason why God did not institute this form of church government. Although many times it is easier and more expedient to make decisions by oneself; when a person is not thinking clearly, his decisions can have long lasting detrimental consequences.

As a pastor-led church is not the biblical model, so a congregationally-led church is also not the biblical model. If however it were the form of church government that God desired, then one would have to answer the following questions: Why would God have elders in the church; men who are spiritually mature (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), who are to be the overseers, shepherds and guardians of the flock (Acts 20:17,28-30; 1 Pet. 5:1-2), who are to be examples of how to live the Christian life before the flock (1 Pet. 5:3), whom God tells the people in the church to obey, appreciate and highly esteem in love (1 Thes. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17), be under the authority of the flock? Why would God desire the members of the church who are not at the same level of spiritual maturity and responsibility as the elders, manage and direct the elders? Is it because collectively the combined wisdom of the congregation will be greater than that of the elders? Though this is possible, it generally is not the case. Many times the average church member is not aware of what is happening in the church. They do not understand many of the private issues which the elders are privy to and all of the other things that are happening behind the scenes. They may not share their vision and understanding of how God has been and is directing the church. They may also lack knowledge of how the church operates, its policies, procedures, etc. Also, since the pastor-teacher is a man called of God to his position (Eph. 4:11), and the other elders are spiritual men who aspire to their position (1 Tim. 3:1-7), it would make sense that these are the ones whom God will lead the church through, not the congregation. Taking these things into account along with the fact that generally the average member lacks the spiritual maturity, wisdom, experience, and knowledge of the Word of God which the pastor and elders have, they usually are not in a position to make more knowledgeable and informed decisions. Therefore, the elders are in a much better position to make decisions for the church.[4] This does not mean that the elders should not listen to and consider the views of the congregation, but they are the ones who are to be the final decision makers. It was never God's plan to have qualified, mature elders (men who are to be overseeing the church) be overseen by the church. This goes against the teaching of the New Testament and against the whole tenor of the Bible. Therefore, elders are to lead the people and not be led by the people, but by Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Pet. 5:4).

<u>The tasks of an elder:</u>

The tasks of an elder are very specific in the Scriptures, this being in contrast to those of a deacon and deaconess. His responsibilities are many, as well as his accountability to Christ (cf. 1 Pet. 5:4; Heb. 13:17). They include:

1. Guarding the flock:
   a. Against false teachers -- Acts 20:28-30
   b. Refuting those who contradict -- 2 Tim. 2:25; Titus 1:9
2. Overseeing the flock:
   a. Keeping watch over and giving an account for the souls of the flock -- Acts 20:28; Heb. 13.17
   b. Having charge over the flock -- 1 Thes. 5:12
   c. Managing the flock -- 1 Tim. 3:5

[4] This is of course true if the elders are true men of God who seek Him and live for Him as they should. If they do not, then they should not be elders (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

d. Ruling the flock well -- 1 Tim. 5:17

3. Shepherding the flock -- Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2
   a. Caring for the flock and their needs -- cf. Ezk. 34:1-16
   b. Being an example to the flock -- 1 Tim. 4:12; 1 Pet. 5:3
   c. Disciplining the flock -- Mat. 18:17-18; Titus 3:10-11
   d. Restoring those who have strayed from the flock -- Gal. 6:1
   e. Ministering through prayer for the flock-- Acts 6:4
      1) Praying for the flock -- cf. Acts 6:4
      2) Praying for the sick of the flock -- James 5:14-15
   f. Ministering through the Word of God to the flock -- Acts 6:4
      1) Discipling the flock -- Mat. 28:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:2
      2) Exhorting and teaching the flock -- 1 Tim. 4:13; 1 Thes. 5:12
      3) Publicly reading the Scriptures to the flock -- 1 Tim. 4:13
      4) Teaching the Word of God diligently and accurately to the flock -- 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 2 Tim. 2:15; James 3:1
4. Other responsibilities:
   a. Doing the work of an evangelist -- Mat. 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2 Tim. 4:5
   b. Using their spiritual gift(s) within the body -- 1 Tim. 4:14
   c. Working hard in the ministry and enduring hardship -- Acts 20:27; 1 Thes. 5:12; 1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 4:5
5. Attitudes of the elder:
   a. Aspiring and desiring to do this work -- 1 Tim. 3:1
   b. Doing the work -- 1 Pet. 5:2-3; Mat. 20:24-28; 2 Cor. 8; 1 Tim. 6:6-19
      1) Not under compulsion, but voluntarily
      2) Not for sordid gain, but with eagerness
      3) Not lording it over, but being an example

Seeing the many facets of the elder's work, this too is further evidence that a plurality of elders is necessary and is the wisest model. Together they can labor as a team, relying upon and helping one another.

<u>His qualifications:</u>

Because of the responsibilities of an elder, God requires that a mature believer be placed in this position. This is why Paul gives the characteristics of a mature believer, which an elder is to manifest in his life. Paul listed these characteristics in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, which are listed below. Provided next to each characteristic is a brief explanation of that characteristic in parentheses. Those characteristics which are listed in both epistles by Paul are listed only once below in point 1 and are not repeated in point 2.

1. From 1 Timothy 3:1-7

   "An overseer, then, must be":

   a) Above reproach (good reputation)
   b) Husband of one wife (male; having moral purity in regard to his wife)
   c) Temperate (balanced and moderate)
   d) Prudent (man of wisdom; self-controlled and sensible)
   e) Respectable (adorning or displaying the gospel in one's life; orderly)

f) Hospitable (entertaining guests; generous, caring for others)
g) Able to teach (teaching others in a humble, gentle manner; teachable)
h) Not addicted to wine (avoiding overindulgence)
i) Not pugnacious (not resorting to violence or being quarrelsome)
j) Gentle (being meek and fair-minded; reasonable)
k) Uncontentious (being a peacemaker; not quarrelsome)
l) Free from the love of money (not desiring wealth, but generous)
m) One who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (order and stability in his home)
n) Not a new convert (must be a mature man)
o) Have a good reputation with those outside the church (being above reproach before unbelievers)

2. From Titus 1:5-9

"Namely, if any man":

a. Having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion (having children who are trustworthy, faithful ("believe"), respectable and obedient; under control)
b. Not self-willed (not self-centered)
c. Not quick-tempered (does not lose control of his composer quickly)
d. Loving what is good (in all aspects of his life, thus hating what is evil)
e. Just (righteous, fair and upright)
f. Devout (living a holy life)
g. Self-controlled (disciplined man)
h. Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict (must hold strong to the faith and refute those who teach otherwise)

These character qualities of an elder paint the picture of a man (not a woman) who has his life and home in order. This is the kind of man who, along with his fellow elders, will be able to oversee and shepherd the church of God as God desires. The position of elder in the body of Christ is a spiritual one, thus such men must be mature, spiritual people. They have a great responsibility: "...to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). Therefore, because the people of the church who have been "allotted" to the charge of the elders (1 Pet. 5:3) were not purchased cheaply, the church elders need to remember their great responsibility; that they keep watch over the souls of their sheep "as those who will give an account" (Heb. 13:17). This is a serious responsibility that should not be taken lightly because one day the elders will have to answer for their labor or lack of it (1 Pet. 5:4).

Because of the very important role and responsibilities an elder has in the body of Christ, Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 5: "The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching" (vs. 17). The double honor they are to receive are generous wages for their work (vs. 18). Also because of their position and being men of high character, Paul told Timothy: "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses" (vs. 19). In other words, before an accusation could

be made, there needed to be solid proof of the elder's transgression. If an elder were reprimanded for a sin and continued in it, Paul further stated: "Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful *of sinning*" (vs. 20). Discipline of an elder was to be followed, and the people were not to show bias in the process due to the elder's status within the church (vs. 21).

In the same passage Paul addresses another important issue with Timothy, that of choosing elders. Paul stated: "Do not lay hands upon anyone *too* hastily and thereby share *responsibility for* the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin" (vs. 22). Paul's point was that when Timothy was involved in choosing elders, he was to make sure that these men were truly qualified and ready for such a position before he committed them to the Lord through the laying on of hands. This is important because Paul said, "the sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their *sins* follow after. Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed" (vss. 24-25). In other words, some men's sins are evident and easy to see, whereas other men's sins are hidden and not revealed until later, maybe after they have already been appointed as an elder. Therefore Timothy was to be careful in this process, as church leaders must be today. This same error of putting unqualified men in positions of leadership is common today as well.[5] When a man is placed in a leadership position before he is ready, various problems can arise. One potential problem can be pride (1 Tim. 3:6; 1 Pet. 5:5-7). This can occur when one desires the position of elder for the sake of position only, not for the sake of serving others.

Another potential problem arises when an unqualified person with hidden sin is placed into leadership. Such a person is one who lacks maturity, and this may be the reason he is hiding sin. A person with any degree of maturity would simply turn down the position and not accept it because of his condition. If however he accepts the position, he shows that he lacks understanding, discretion and possibly integrity. This is not the kind of person who should be placed in such an important role as that of an elder. A decision to do this will result in poor spiritual leadership on his part, and he probably will not be able to handle the responsibility and power associated with his position. As the writer of Hebrews said: "For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil" (Heb. 5:13-14). This is the reason a pastor/elder is to be mature; a person who is used to solid food and can discern good and evil. This is why churches are not to place just anyone in a position of leadership, even when qualified people are not available. Church leaders need to pray and train up leaders, not just taking anyone to fill the position.

The position of spiritual leadership over a church is a responsibility of great importance. This position is not to be taken lightly, for the ramifications of such a position are eternal. Therefore, regarding church leaders who build upon the foundation of the church, that being Christ (1 Cor. 3:11), Paul stated: "Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be*

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[5] Another, yet opposite problem, is when pastors and elders do not want to share their authority base with others in the church. They purposely do not place qualified men in leadership positions so that they can be in complete and absolute control.

revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are" (1 Cor. 3:12-17). Therefore if an unqualified leader does substandard or even negligent work within the church, the church will suffer, the body of Christ will suffer; and one day this leader will suffer when he has to give an account to Christ for his poor performance[6] (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10). As this passage states, the Holy Spirit indwells the church of God and the church is holy. The church is not to be a place where zealous, unqualified people are allowed to be in positions of authority. The church is the body of Christ; it is made up of people who are loved by God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son. They were purchased with the precious blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). Because this is true, the church's leadership needs to be very cautious about who they lay hands upon to be in charge of the church of Jesus Christ.

The deacon and his function:

The role of a deacon is much different than that of an elder, even though often churches use these two words interchangeably. Whereas elders are the spiritual leaders of the church, deacons are the church's servants (the word "deacon" comes from the Greek word *"diakonos*," which means servant). Therefore the role of a deacon is to serve the church.

<u>The tasks of a deacon:</u>

Unlike the elders, a deacon does not have specific responsibilities listed in the New Testament for him to perform. His tasks are determined by the elders of the church. We see an example of this in Acts Chapter 6 where a problem arose in the church in Jerusalem (vs. 1). As a result of this problem, the Apostles who oversaw the church proposed a solution to the problem (vs. 3). Seven men were to be chosen for the purpose of the administration and distribution of food to widows in the church in Jerusalem. The Apostles also gave the congregation four character qualities that the men who were to be chosen needed to possess in order to fulfill this role (vs. 3). Though these men were not called deacons in this passage, this is the role which they fulfilled as chosen servants of the church (vs. 2); this in contrast to a spiritual task such as prayer, ministry of the Word (vss. 2,4), etc. Another evidence that they were deacons was that after they were chosen, the Apostles prayed and laid hands on them (vs. 6), indicating that their position did possess a level of responsibility within the church. We also see in this passage that as it was the task of the Apostles (they being the elders of the church; cf. 1 Pet. 5:1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1) to pray and minister the Word (vss. 2,4) and to determine the solution to a

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[6] Many misunderstand 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 as talking about an individual believer. This is incorrect because the word "you" is plural, therefore referring to the church. Though the one destroying the church could be a false teacher, in context it makes more sense that the one who does this is a believer. In what way then will God "destroy" the believer? Possibly by making him sick, week, or even by taking his life (cf. 1 Cor. 11:30; 1 John 5:16; Heb. 12:4-11), though God cannot (Rom. 8:1) and will not destroy him spiritually (1 Cor. 3:15).

problem that had presented itself (overseeing and shepherding), it was the task of the chosen servants (deacons) to carry out the solution, being under the authority of the Apostles.

Therefore it can be concluded that a deacon, though he is to be a spiritually qualified person (see his qualifications below), is not a spiritual leader like an elder[7]. Instead, he is a servant who is required to meet spiritual qualifications due to his level of responsibility, and also because he is a representative of the church. Does this mean that a deacon cannot be in a position of leadership within the church? No. He can lead people if his responsibilities call for it. But the point to be made is that his responsibilities are not the same as an elder, which are mainly spiritual in nature.

His qualifications:

Though the role of a deacon is very important within the structure of a church, his qualifications as well as his role are considerably less than those of an elder. However, he is still to be a person who has proven character qualities, being first tested to see if he is above reproach. He must be faithful, manifest the other designated character qualities of a deacon, and be capable of carrying out the role that has been assigned to him by the elders. Paul lists the qualifications of a deacon in 1 Timothy 3:8-10,12-13. Provided next to each characteristic is a brief explanation of that characteristic in parentheses. Also provided is the list of the four qualifications which the Apostles gave to the early church as recorded in Acts 6:3.

1. 1 Timothy 3:8-10,12-13

   "Deacons likewise must be":

   a. Men of dignity (honorable in deeds)
   b. Not double-tongued (not a deceiver)
   c. Not addicted to much wine (avoiding overindulgence)
   d. Not fond of sordid gain (not greedy)
   e. Holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience (not wavering, but standing firm in his faith)
   f. Tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach (good reputation)
   g. Husband of only one wife (having moral purity in regard to his wife)
   h. Good managers of their children and their own households (order and stability in his home)

   "For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."

2. From Acts 6:3:

   a. Good reputation
   b. Full of the Spirit
   c. Full of wisdom

[7] If deacons are spiritual leaders, than it would logically follow that deaconesses are spiritual leaders as well because the word "deaconess" is simply the feminine form of the word for servant.

d. Able to take charge of a task

We can see from these characteristics that a deacon is to be a man of impeccable character who does not waver in his faith, who walks in the Spirit, who is trustworthy, and who is a good manager of his home. These qualifications are specified for a person who is officially chosen by the church to carry out the responsibilities designated by the elders within the local church.

The deaconess and her function:

The role of a deaconess is the same as that of a deacon. The word "deaconess" comes from the same Greek word, *"diakonos*" (as the word "deacon"), which means servant. Therefore a deaconess, like her male counterpart the deacon, is a servant of the church. Please note that in Romans 16:1 the same Greek word used to describe Phoebe (*"diakonos*") is used for a deacon.

<u>The tasks of a deaconess:</u>

As in the case of a deacon, a deaconess does not have specific responsibilities listed in the New Testament for her to perform. Therefore her tasks are also determined by the elders of the church. In the New Testament Phoebe was called a deaconess ("servant" in English translations). Priscilla and Anna are examples of godly female servants of what a deaconess should be. Here are their characteristics:

1. Phoebe -- Rom. 16:1-2
   a. A servant of the church
   b. A helper of many

2. Priscilla -- Rom. 16:3-4; Acts 18:24-26; 1 Cor. 16:19
   a. Risked her life for others -- Rom. 16:3-4
   b. Was knowledgeable in the Word and able to teach others -- Acts 18:24-26
   c. Opened her home for a church to meet -- 1 Cor. 16:19

3. Anna -- Luke 2:36-37
   a. Always served in the temple ("serving night and day")
   b. Was a woman of prayer
   c. Was a woman who fasted

In these examples we see various characteristics. What is common to each of them is that they were godly servants. Collectively we see women who knew the Word of God, prayed and fasted, and were willing to sacrifice even their lives for Christ.

<u>Her qualifications:</u>

A deaconess, as her male counterpart the deacon, is also to be a spiritual person. Paul lists her qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:11. Provided next to each characteristic is a brief explanation of that characteristic in parentheses.

"Women must likewise be":

a. Dignified (honorable in deeds)
b. Not malicious gossips (not a false accuser or slanderer)
c. Temperate (self-controlled, free from influences which control)
d. Faithful in all things (trustworthy, dependable)

Some interpret this verse as the qualifications necessary for a deacon's wife, and not for a deaconess. This explanation does not follow the context of the passage. First, Paul is speaking to Timothy about the qualifications of designated positions within the church, of which a deaconess is one. Second, Paul does not state that he has deviated from this pattern and is now giving the qualifications of a deacon's wife. Third, if Paul were giving the qualifications of a deacon's wife, then one must ask why did he not give the qualifications of an elder's wife earlier. It would make sense that he would have, knowing that an elder's position holds much greater responsibility as a spiritual leader. Therefore, one can conclude that this verse states the qualifications of a deaconess.

A deaconess, therefore, is to be dignified, temperate and faithful like the deacon. Added to her list of qualifications, she is not to be a malicious gossip. Such qualifications were specified for a person who is officially chosen by the local church to carry out the responsibilities designated by the elders of that church.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. List below the names of the elders of your church. Include yourself if you are an elder or the pastor.

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2. If you are an elder (pastor), do you feel that you meet the qualifications given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9? If not, please list below the characteristics which you feel that you need to improve? Then list a plan on how you can work at doing this (e.g., accountability partner, memorizing Scripture, studying the Scriptures, reading a book on the topic, practical steps on how to make the necessary changes, etc.).

   Issues to work on:

   Plan:

3. As you consider the elders which you listed above, do you have any concerns about any of them in regards to their qualifications as elders? If so, what do you think your response should be to this situation from a biblical perspective? Please consider these passages: Matthew 18:15-20; John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 9:26-27; Ephesians 4:2; Philippians 2:1-4; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Peter 5:5.

4. What is your church currently doing to develop its elders to help them grow in their faith, knowledge of God's Word, and ministry skills? Please remember that stagnant leaders will produce a stagnant church. Growing, zealous leaders will produce a growing, zealous church. Please develop a plan to help your elders grow in these areas. Please consider ways in which you can do this, utilizing such things as: books, Bible studies, discipleship materials, speakers, DVDs, and practical training (teaching them to minister in jails, hospitals, with youth; training them on how to lead small groups, how to preach and teach better, etc.).

5. List below the names of the deacons and deaconesses in your church.

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6. As you consider the people who you listed above, do you have any concerns about any of them in regards to their qualifications as deacons (1 Tim. 3:8-10,12) or deaconesses (1 Tim. 3:12)? If so, what do you feel should be your response to this situation from a biblical perspective? Please consider these passages: Matthew 18:15-20; John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 9:26-27; Ephesians 4:2; Philippians 2:1-4; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Peter 5:5.

7. What is your church currently doing to develop its deacons and deaconesses to help them grow in their faith, knowledge of God's Word, and ministry skills? Please develop a plan to help them grow in these areas. Please consider ways in which you can do this, utilizing such things as: books, Bible studies, discipleship materials, speakers, DVDs, and practical training on how to be effective servants of Christ.

8. Identify potential future elders, deacons and deaconesses whom you need to help to develop in their faith.

   Elders:

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Deacons:

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Deaconesses:

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9. What is your plan to prepare these future servants of the church? You can begin training potential elders, deacons and deaconesses together in a group with general training. You can then make their training more specialized over time, separating them into their respective groups. Please remember that future elders should first serve as deacons to prove themselves. List some ideas below of how you can begin to develop these people through ministries of the church to prepare them for future church positions.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. Many times a church planter or pastor will invest a large amount of time in a potential elder or deacon only to have them leave the church or never really develop enough in their faith to become a leader. Though this investment of time was not wasted, how might you try and protect yourself from this happening to you?

2. When preparing elders, deacons, and deaconesses, what characteristics will you look for when determining in whom to invest your time? Whom you choose and train will either help or hinder the church planting process.

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3. What general time frame do you have in mind before you think that someone will be ready to become an elder, deacon, or deaconess? How will you know when they are ready for their responsibilities? The amount of time needed should be based upon the training required for the average person to mature in their faith to meet the qualifications for these positions. List your ideas below. Please keep in mind Paul's exhortation found in 1 Timothy 5:22,24-25.

   Elder:

   Deacon:

   Deaconess:

4. Jesus, Paul, and Moses spent a lot of time together with their disciples, training them through their words and lives. How do you plan on doing this with your new disciples without this negatively interfering with your family?

5. As a church planter, how will you know when it is time to turn the leadership of your church over to a pastor so that you can move on to plant another church? How will you know to whom to turn the leadership over?

ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES:

Church Organization

Why is church organization and infrastructure important?

A church's organization and infrastructure are vital to the operation of the church. A poorly organized church which has a poor infrastructure will accomplish little. A church which is well-organized and has an appropriate and functioning infrastructure for its specific needs will accomplish much. Because the goal of any local church and its leaders is to make an impact for Christ, this should be an important topic for any church.

Churches operate with different infrastructures which govern them. Some churches are governed by one man, the pastor. He makes most, if not all, of the decisions for the church. Little is done without his approval, and in many cases his leadership style tends to be dictatorial. On the other end of the spectrum are churches where no decisions are made without the approval of church membership. In extreme cases, the church's utility bills cannot even be paid without a vote being taken of the membership for their approval. In such cases, the church leaders are not able to function because they have no authority to make necessary decisions. As would be expected, there are many other forms of church government which are in between these two extremes.

As one considers these two aspects of the church, one could imagine infrastructure as the skeleton of the human body, and organization as how the parts of the body function. A strong and healthy skeletal system supports the body and gives it the ability to move and perform its tasks. Without a skeletal system, the body is not able to do anything. It will eventually die. In the case of a church which does not have a healthy infrastructure (consisting of believers in positions of ministry, and the structure which integrates each position), it will eventually become an invalid that will in time die spiritually, if not also as an organization. Therefore, how this structure is designed will make a great difference in how a church functions.

In the case of a well-organized church, it, like a healthy normal body, can do many things all at the same time. Such a church does things on time, correctly, professionally, orderly and rarely at the last minute. But a poorly organized church

functions like a body where its parts are not able to function correctly, either independently or simultaneously. In such a case, the body is not able to function efficiently, and tasks which the body needs to complete will many times not be done correctly if done at all. Churches which operate this way do things in a mediocre way, missing deadlines, not accomplishing goals, doing things at the last minute; and as a result doing them poorly. Therefore, many times they miss valuable opportunities. This is why a church's infrastructure and organization are so important to the life and function of a church.

What is the biblical model?

Organization:

Organization is important because it facilitates order in the church. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians about their lack of order, he made such statements as:

- "But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God" (1 Cor. 11:16)
- "for God is not *a God* of confusion but of peace..." (1 Cor. 14:33)
- "...as in all the churches of the saints..." (1 Cor. 14:33-34)
- "But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner" (1 Cor. 14:40).

And to Titus, Paul said:

- "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains..." (Titus 1:5)

As one can see from these passages, God desires order in His churches as did the Apostle Paul. Things are not to be done in a haphazard, chaotic manner. Churches need to have goals to move toward so that they know where they are headed and what the goals are (cf. Mat. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; Eph. 2:19-22; 4:11-16; Php. 2:2; 2 Tim. 4:1-5). These are objectives which need to be determined through prayer and by faith in a Great God who can do great things.

Another reason that organization in the church is important is because an organized church gives the people of the church a sense of order and stability (cf. Acts 6:1-5), as well as peace (cf. Exo. 18:23; Col. 3:15). These things are essential for a church that desires to make an impact for Christ. If these things are not a part of the church, then the people will not have a sense of cohesiveness. Without cohesiveness, the church will have a difficult time "being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose" (Php. 2:2). They will then accomplish little and may eventually lose their desire and willingness to be a part of such a church.

Infrastructure:

The infrastructure of a church is vital to its operation because it supports the church's ministries which helps them and the church as a whole operate efficiently. Without this, nothing would be accomplished because there would be no system or

people in place to make things happen. A church without a good infrastructure is no more than a gathering of people who lack a specific purpose, plan or goal. A well-developed infrastructure will help to:

1. Assist people in leadership carry out specific functions, thus sharing the workload together -- cf. Exo. 18:25-26; Acts 6:3; 1 Cor. 12:4-7,12-25; 1 Pet. 4:10; Heb. 13:17
2. Have a structure in place which can facilitate problems and specific needs cf. Exo. 18:21-22; Acts 6:1,5; 15:1-2; 1 Cor. 14:25-26; Gal. 6:1-2; Jam. 5:13-16
3. Facilitate planning so that goals and tasks can be accomplished -- cf. Mat. 28:19-20; Luke 14:28-32; 2 Tim. 2:2
4. Oversee the organization so that its principles, goals and purpose are met -- cf. 1 Tim. 4:12-16; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; 1 Pet. 5:2-3
5. Oversee members in the organization and to assist them when necessary cf. Acts 6:1-6; 1 Cor. 12:18-27; Heb. 13:17; Exo. 18:26
6. Facilitate efficiency in accomplishing the organization's goals -- cf. Exo. 18:14, 23-26; Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 14:33, 40; 1 Tim. 3:5; Titus 1:5

A good infrastructure will accomplish these objectives. The key to a good infrastructure is that it is not too complex so that the organization becomes bogged down in bureaucracy, or that it is so unstructured that nothing gets accomplished. An organization that is too structured can be stifling -- oppressing people, their creativity, abilities and the use of their spiritual gifts and talents. An organization which lacks structure generally does not encourage its members to be involved, accomplish, or grow toward their maximum potential in the use of their spiritual gifts and talents. Such organizations can be characterized by chaos, a lack of accomplishment, and people who are doing their own thing (if they are doing anything at all) because there is not an appropriate structure in place to guide them. Therefore, having too complex an infrastructure or one that is not complex enough is detrimental to the organization and its function.

When considering the biblical infrastructure of the church, one must take into account the servant positions which were established in the church by God: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers (Eph. 4:11), elders (1 Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:5), deacons (1 Tim. 3:8) and deaconesses (1 Tim. 3:11). For clarification, evangelists and pastor-teachers are also elders, just as the apostles and prophets once were[8] (cf. Acts 15:2,4,6,22,23; 21:18; 1 Pet. 5:1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1), though their main responsibility as elders is the equipping of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16). The people who hold these positions are very important to the infrastructure of a church. They will fulfill key roles of responsibility.[9]

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[8] With the completion of the New Testament, the biblical offices of apostle and prophet are no longer functioning. See article titled, "Pastor's and Evangelist's Equipping Ministry."

[9] In both the Old and New Testaments, the leaders of the nation of Israel and the church were men who were identified by the title of elder (cf. Exo. 3:16; 4:29; 24:1; Mat. 16:21; Mark 14:53; Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 5:17,19). Elders are men who are to be biblically qualified, mature in their faith (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus. 1:5-9); men who protect (Acts 20:17,28-30), lead (1 Pet. 5:1-3), and teach the people of their local church (1 Tim. 4:13,16; 2 Tim. 4:2). Therefore it is the elders who are the God-appointed leaders of the local church. Assisting the elders are deacons and deaconesses who are servants of the church (cf. Acts 6:1-6) to carry out necessary tasks which are determined by the elders (cf. Acts

Although the elders, deacons and deaconesses constitute the "official" positions of the local church, one must remember that the remaining and greatest part of the church's infrastructure is made up of individual believers (cf. 1 Cor. 12). It is the totality of all believers in a local church who make up the body of Christ in that church (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 6:15; Eph. 3:6). They are also a part of the universal body of Christ (cf. Mat. 16:18; Rom. 16:16; 12:12-13,27; 1 Cor 10:32; Eph. 5:23-25; Col. 3:15). It is these individual believers who are gifted by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7,11) "for the work of service" (Eph. 4:12; cf. Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-7,26-27). They are just as vital to the church's infrastructure and its ability to function as are its leaders. So whereas it is the function of the church's pastor-teacher and/or evangelist to be involved in the equipping of the body as they oversee the work of the church with the other elders, it is the rest of the body they must mobilize to use their gifts to do the work of Christ. As they do this, the body will naturally cause itself to grow; building itself up in love (Eph. 4:16).

Organization and infrastructure:

The organization and infrastructure of a church are very closely linked. At times it is hard to distinguish between the two, and it is impossible to separate the two. They are interdependent. Below are two examples from Scripture where the lack of organization and infrastructure are seen together.

The first example is found in Exodus 18. In this passage Moses' father-in-law Jethro visited him and helped him correct an organizational problem that he had in his administration of the nation of Israel. Jethro observed that when Moses sat to judge the people's disputes (vs. 16), "the people stood about Moses from the morning until the evening" (vs. 13). Jethro questioned this because he saw that what Moses was doing was not healthy for him or for the people (vss. 17-18). It was not healthy for Moses because he was the only judge, and he was overburdened. It was not healthy for the people because they had to sit and wait for long periods of time, probably frustrated with the process. Therefore, Jethro proposed a plan to Moses that would alleviate this problem (vss. 19-23), which Moses then implemented (vss. 24-26). Moses was to delegate a large portion of his responsibility of judging disputes to others who were qualified, with Moses judging only the most difficult cases which those appointed were not able to discern. Through this act a multilevel judicial system (infrastructure) was implemented in Israel. What would be the end result according to Jethro? Endurance for Moses and peace for the people (vs. 23; organization). An organized church with an effective infrastructure will accomplish the same results -- endurance for the church leaders and peace for the people.

The second example of a lack of organization and infrastructure is found in the book of Acts. In Acts 6, the Hellenistic Jews where complaining that "their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food" (vs. 1). The apostles called the congregation together and told them to select from amongst themselves seven men who met certain prerequisites established by the apostles whom they

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6:2-3). For further discussion on this topic, please see the article titled, "Church Leadership Roles Defined."

could place "in charge of this task" (vss. 2-3). The apostles implemented this system (infrastructure) so that they would not be taken away from their primary responsibilities (organization), that of prayer and teaching the Word of God (vss. 2,4). As a result of this decision, it is recorded: "The statement found approval with the whole congregation" (vs. 5). In other words, the organizational problem was solved, the people were happy about the outcome, and the apostles were able to focus on their primary ministries. This is the result of an organized church.

One important lesson found in these two examples is that the leaders needed to be willing to share their authority and not be involved in each and every decision made. In order to do this they had to humble themselves, not feel threatened, and place their trust in others, knowing that they could not do everything themselves. They did not need to be involved in every aspect of ministry in which their church was involved.

The outcome of a church which has a developed and functioning infrastructure will be its ability to mobilize a maximum number of believers, 100% being the ultimate goal. In such a case, the body theoretically will be working properly and efficiently. For this to happen, it is the role of the elders to place each believer in a place where his spiritual gift, personality, and talents can be used for the furtherance of the body of Christ. When placing a person in a role within the church, it is important that the believer's level of maturity and personal desires be taken into account for the specific function he is to perform (cf. 1 Tim. 5:22,24-25). It is important for those in a position of leadership to be willing to share their authority and responsibilities with others. It should not be the leaders' goal to lord it over the church (Mat. 20:25-26; Luke 22:24-27; 1 Pet. 5:3), but instead to serve the church in humility (Mark 9:33-35; 10:42-45; cf. John 21:15-17).

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Describe your church. Be thoughtful about your answers. My church (circle your answers):

• Is organized	Is chaotic
• Makes plans	Does not plan
• Has goals for the future	Has no direction
• Has multiple leaders	Is directed solely by the pastor
• Knows its purpose	Does not know its purpose
• Has many members serving	Has only a few members serving
• Is making an impact for Christ	Is not making an impact for Christ
• Regularly sees unbelievers saved	Rarely sees unbelievers saved
• Is a place of peace	Is a place of disharmony
• Is a place of comfort	Is a place many don't enjoy being
• Focuses on important things	Focuses on trivial things
• Helps people grow spiritually	Has many immature Christians
• Is unified	Is divided
• Expresses faith, hope and love	Lacks faith, hope and love
• Walks according to the Spirit	Walks according to the flesh
• Obeys the Bible	Follows tradition and rules
• Continually does good works	Rarely does good works
• Is spiritually alive	Is spiritually dead
• Loves Jesus first	Loves itself first
• Reaches out to the lost world	Is not concerned about the world

Now, consider how people in your church would answer these same questions. Next, consider how the people of your community would answer these questions. How do the three perspectives compare? The goal of this question is to get an accurate picture of your church: Is it an effective church which is making an impact for Christ, or is it not? You may want to consider having people from your church answer these questions anonymously on a sheet of paper and look at their answers in comparison to your own.

2. Can a correlation be made between a church's organization and infrastructure and the statements listed in question number 1? Or to ask the question in another way: "How does a church's organization and infrastructure impact the church, its ministries, its attitudes, its relationship with Christ, etc.?"

3. If your church is being governed only by a pastor and not a group of elders, then what needs to be done to change this? What would be the advantages to the pastor and church if this were to change?

4. What changes need to be made within your church to strengthen its infrastructure?

5. What changes are needed within your church to make it more organized?

6. The church is made up of people, and the main task of the pastor is to equip them (Eph. 4:11-12). How is your church fulfilling this mandate? What is your church doing to equip the body of Christ in your church?

7. Are the majority of believers in your church serving and using their spiritual gifts in ministry? If not, then what can your church do to help them become involved in ministry?

8. What possibilities exist for starting new ministries inside and outside of your church? List them below:

   Inside:

   -
   -
   -
   -
   -

   Outside:

   -
   -
   -
   -
   -

9. Choose one opportunity from each category above and consider the following questions:

INSIDE

LIST THE OPPORTUNITY:

- Who can lead this new ministry?

  - Main leader:
  - Co-leader:
  - Co-leader:

- Who can advise the leadership team in the development and execution of this ministry who are currently active in ministry in your church?

  -
  -

- Who can help the leadership team in the development and execution of this ministry who are not currently active in ministry in your church (people you would like to develop)?

  -
  -
  -
  -

- Please consider the following regarding this new ministry:

  - Purpose
  - Goals
  - Target group
  - Resources needed
  - Location
  - Time

OUTSIDE

LIST THE OPPORTUNITY:

- Who can lead this new ministry?

  - Main leader:
  - Co-leader:
  - Co-leader:

- Who can advise the leadership team in the development and execution of this ministry who are currently active in ministry in your church?

-
-

- Who can help the leadership team in the development and execution of this ministry who are not currently active in ministry in your church (people you would like to develop)?

  -
  -
  -
  -

- Please consider the following regarding this new ministry:

  - Purpose
  - Goals
  - Target people
  - Resources needed
  - Location
  - Time

NOTE: Please find meaningful, productive and necessary ministries in which you can involve your church members (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-6). These people are a resource for the church. God the Holy Spirit gifted them for a reason when they became believers (1 Cor. 12:7,11,13); He has a purpose for them (1 Cor. 12:17-18). God the Father in eternity past prepared the good works that He has for them to fulfill (Eph. 2:10). To allow them to simply sit in church week after week and do nothing is a waste of God's spiritual gifting, their lives and abilities. Please don't let this happen (Eph. 5:15-17; 1 Thes. 5:4-8). Remember, one day you will be held accountable for how you shepherded the flock which God allotted to your charge (2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). Be able to give a good account.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. Have you determined what the infrastructure of your church will look like? This is important to decide now because this decision needs to be based largely upon the form of government that your church will utilize. This decision will also guide you in the future as to how you will build upon (add to) the initial structure which you will establish when you begin your church. This structure will also be an important component in determining your church's organization and functionality as it grows. Below draw and label a structure which you believe you will use in your church. Also give the biblical basis for this structure.

2. What plan do you have to involve people in ministry, using the gifts which the Holy Spirit has given them? If you involve people from the time you establish your church, then service will be an integral and regular part of their lives and your church.

3. What would you do in this situation? While planting your church, a man who is very nice and friendly and has been a Christian for many years begins to attend your church plant. He tells you that he wants to help you, and you are delighted about this. Before you know it, he begins to invest a lot of time and money in the church plant and is perceived by the people of the church as a leader. Yet the more that he works with you, the more you realize that he is subtly manipulating you, the people of the church, and the direction of the church. Explain your answer.

ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES:

Church Finances

Issues surrounding money:

Money can be a blessing and it can be a curse. Yet, money is an important aspect in the daily operation of a church. Therefore, those who have charge of it need to make sure that it is handled properly or it could become the center of controversy and problems.

One needs to remember the words of the Apostle Paul to Timothy: "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Tim. 6:10). This is the reason Paul states that it is important for the pastor and elders to be "free from the love of money" (1 Tim. 3:13; Titus 1:7). Peter echoed Paul's thought when he stated that an elder is to shepherd the flock of God, though not for sordid gain (1 Pet. 5:2). In other words, a person in spiritual leadership of a church is to be a person who understands that money can tempt, corrupt, and destroy. Therefore church leaders must be composed of men who do not crave money and who are careful with its use, especially in conjunction with the church's finances. Money is a source of temptation (1 Tim. 6:9-10), and everyone is susceptible to its lure (1 Cor. 10:12).

Protecting the church's financial system:

One of Paul's themes in 2 Corinthians was the careful handling of money when addressing the issue of the collection for the poor believers in Jerusalem. In his exhortation, Paul talks about those things which were important to this process (2 Cor. 8:16-24). Four issues arose. They are:

1. That the men who would handle the money would be men of virtue (vss. 18,22-23)
2. That the offering would be administered by Paul and his companions for the glory of the Lord Himself (vs. 19)
3. That they would take precautions so that no one would be able to discredit them in their administration of this generous gift (vs. 20)

4. That they would have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men (vs. 21)

Point number one is critical because when godly men are in charge of the offering, then the next three points will be their desire and focus. This should be the same desire and goal of all of Christ's churches and their leaders. This is why it is important that a financial system, including procedures, is in use within the local church. Such a system helps protect not only the church but its leaders as well. This is also why no one person should ever be in charge of or count the offerings alone. There should always be a minimum of two people for the purpose of accountability. The pastor should not be a part of this process because he should never directly handle or have control over the church's money. First, he should never give the impression to anyone that he has a desire for money (1 Tim. 3:3; 1 Pet. 5:2-3; cf. 1 Tim. 6:17-19). Second, since he is the church's most noticeable, prominent and influential member, he needs to be protected from the temptation to use the church's money for his own advantage. Third, if there would ever be a situation where embezzlement of the church's money should occur and the pastor is not involved in the process of handling this money, then no one will be able to point a finger at him and say that he has mishandled funds (cf. 1 Thes. 5:22). This is important since he is God's representative to the people of the church and the community. Satan would love to blemish or even discredit the pastor's name whenever possible (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8-9). Furthermore, if a church member is found culpable of mishandling funds, this situation can be handled through the church discipline process. Even though the same procedure must be carried out when the church's pastor is found culpable of such a sin (1 Tim. 5:20), the damage to the church is generally much less when the guilty person is not the pastor.

Consequently, a church's leadership team must set up a detailed system of accountability with procedures on how the church's money is to be handled and accounted for. Godly men should be placed in charge of the money; the pastor should not be one of them. All money collected should be counted, and a confirmation of the amount recorded. This system must be one that the leaders can easily review for accountability and should be reviewed on a monthly basis. It should reflect how much has been collected, how much has been spent and for what, how much money remains, and how the remaining money is designated (e.g., general fund, special project, evangelism, missions, etc.). Christians, and especially Christian leaders (1 Cor. 3:9-15), are to be good stewards of what God has placed in their charge (1 Cor. 4:2; Titus 1:7), for one day they will have to give an account for their stewardship when they appear before their Chief Shepherd (cf. Luke 12:41-48; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 5:4).

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Does your church have an accounting system in place which guarantees the proper handling of the church's finances?

2. Who guarantees that the accounting system is being followed properly?

3. Does more than one man count the offering? If not, how can this situation be rectified?

4. Does the pastor of your church have anything to do with its finances? If so, do you feel that this is wise? Will you change this situation? If not, then please explain why.

5. Do you see any problems with the way in which money is handled in your church? What problems do you see? What needs to be done to solve these problems?

6. Does your church board give a yearly accounting of the church finances to the congregation? If not, then when will your church begin to do this? Doing this will help maintain credibility of the church financial system.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. Have you written a policy about how money will be handled in your church? If not, then please write your thoughts below about this issue which you can later develop into a policy.

2. Answer questions 1-4 and 6 above, applying them to your context of starting a new church.

ORDINANCES:

Baptism

Types of baptisms:

The New Testament speaks about five different types of baptism: the baptism of John, the believer's baptism, Spirit baptism, the baptism of suffering (Mark 10:38-39; Luke 12:50), and the baptism of fire (Mat. 3:11; Luke 3:16). The first three types of baptisms will be the focus of this article; how they differ from one another and which of them are relevant to the church and to the believer today.

The baptism of John the Baptist was a baptism of repentance (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 13:24; 19:4). In his ministry, John was preparing the way for Jesus and His future ministry (Luke 3:1-6). Therefore John's ministry was specific and only to the people of the nation of Israel (Isa. 40:3-5; Mal. 3:1-3; Luke 3:8; Acts 13:24). Their Messiah was coming, and John was calling them to a state of readiness to accept their Savior and King (Luke 3:15-17; Acts 19:4). Therefore John called the people to repent of their sins and change their lives; and as a symbol of this repentance, they were baptized (cf. Luke 3:8,10-14). As a result of John's baptism, a distinction was made between believing and unbelieving Israel (cf. Luke 7:27-30).

In comparison, John's baptism was a baptism of repentance and preparation which looked forward to the coming of Jesus (Acts 19:4), where the believer's water baptism is an event which looks back to the time of his salvation through Jesus (Acts 19:5-7; cf. Acts 2:41; 8:35-38; 10:47-48; 16:14-15,31-33; 18:8). Therefore, the two baptisms are different, having different purposes. The believer's baptism identifies him with Jesus (cf. Acts 2:38) and with the body of Christ (cf. Acts 2:41). It is a physical act which models a spiritual reality and truth (Rom. 6:3-7), that being the believer's salvation which corresponds to the third type of baptism, Spirit baptism.

During his ministry, John the Baptist said that he was not the Christ, and then said, "...As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Luke 3:16-17). In this statement, John was speaking about both the first and second comings of Christ. At His first advent, which was during the time of John, His coming resulted in believers receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit (cf.

Acts 1:5; 2:1-4,14-18,33; 10:45; 11:15-16). But at His second advent, which is yet in the future, He will arrive bringing a baptism of fire for unbelievers (judgment; cf. John 12:47; Rev. 19:11-21).

In reference to Jesus baptizing believers with the Holy Spirit, this is an event which takes place simultaneously when a person believes, trusting in Jesus as his Savior. It is at that moment the Holy Spirit comes to indwell the new believer (Acts 19:2; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:13; cf. Gal. 3:2; Rom. 8:9). When this event takes place, various things happen to the recipient by the Holy Spirit. He is: a) indwelt (John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19); b) regenerated (1 Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:5); c) anointed (2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:20,27; cf. Acts 10:38); d) sealed (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30); e) clothed with Christ (Gal. 3:27; cf. Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10); and f) equipped with a spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:4,7,9,11). Also, as a result of this baptism, the new believer becomes a part of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). And having been baptized by the Holy Spirit, he has been buried into Christ's death and raised that he might walk in newness of life through his newly acquired capacity to live for Christ (Rom. 6:1-9; 2 Cor. 5:17). Spirit baptism, unlike believer's water baptism, is not an event which is volitional (cf. Acts 8:36); it is involuntary (1 Cor. 12:13). It is this baptism which the believer's water baptism models; the new believer being buried into the death of Christ and being raised in newness of life. Therefore, the believer's water baptism does not save a person, but is the pattern of Spirit baptism (Rom. 6:3-7; Gal. 3:27; Titus 3:5). Please see the appendix for more information on the following passages related to baptism: Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, Romans 6:1-7, Galatians 3:27, Colossians 2:12, and 1 Peter 3:20-21.

When should water baptism take place?

How soon after a person is saved should he be baptized? Should it be done immediately? Or should there be a waiting period to make sure that the person truly is a believer in Jesus Christ; this being a time during which he must prove his salvation before he is baptized (e.g., waiting for a smoker to stop smoking)? To answer this question, the Bible and not reason must be the believer's guide.

When considering the answer to these questions, one must take seriously the words of Jesus which He spoke to His disciples between His resurrection and His ascension. Recorded in Matthew 28:19, Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." The time period during which these instructions were given to the eleven is very significant to their importance. This is true because during this forty-day period before Jesus' ascension, very little is recorded of the things which Jesus told His disciples. But these words which were recorded, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are things which God wanted believers to know and to heed. In these verses Jesus told His disciples to make disciples, after which they were to baptize them, and then to teach them (Mat. 28:20). Often churches rearrange the words of Jesus, teaching the person and then baptizing him, even though this was not the practice of the early church. The early church clearly baptized new converts immediately after they believed (cf. Acts 2:41; 8:35-38; 10:44-48; 16:14-15, 31-33; 18:8; 19:1-7). Why then do some churches today not follow this command of Jesus and baptize a person immediately after his salvation? Well, maybe the weather does not permit them, or there is some other legitimate reason. Or maybe it is simply

because the church leaders make it their responsibility to establish whether the new convert is truly a Christian, measuring him against a set of rules which they have established. But if that is the case, there are two major problems with this thinking. First, Jesus never commanded His disciples to do this. Second, no one can really know for sure if a person is a true believer or not. Only God can genuinely make that determination for sure (2 Tim. 2:19). Therefore, after a person claims to have accepted Christ, the church leaders should verify if the person is a believer to the best of their ability through a series of questions; and then, if the person desires baptism, they should baptize him. If this person does not want to be baptized, then this is a good indication that he may not truly be a believer or has doubts. Of course in this case the person should not be baptized and further instruction should be given to bring him to actual conversion.

What changes should church leaders see in the life of a person before he can be baptized? When reading passages such as Acts 2:37-38,41 and Acts 8:36-38, the change which was evident was a desire in the person to become a disciple of Jesus. When the person desired that, as imperfect as he might have been, he was baptized. So can a person who smokes, for example, be baptized before he stops smoking? Does the fact that he smokes make his desire to follow Christ any less than that of the person who does not smoke? Though some new converts may not smoke, they may struggle with other sins such as pornography, a hidden sin that the church may not know about. So when a person struggles with sin, this does not mean that he did not become a Christian and will not eventually stop the sins in which he is involved. It just means that he is imperfect, and hopefully over time, as the Holy Spirit convicts him of his sins, he will on his own make the necessary changes through the power of the Holy Spirit. Even the Apostle Peter and Barnabas were not perfect and had to be rebuked by the Apostle Paul for their hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11-14). And Paul himself -- a baptized believer who was specifically chosen by Christ as an apostle -- spoke of his own personal struggle with sin (Rom. 7:14-25). Another example is Simon. Shortly after his conversion and baptism (Acts 8:13), Peter had to rebuke him for wanting to purchase the ability to lay hands on people and give them the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:18-24). He was by no means perfect and yet clung to issues related to his past (cf. Acts 8:9-11,19), even though Philip had baptized him and more than likely began to disciple him (Acts 8:12-13). How then can church leaders expect new believers to be perfect, thus not allowing them to be baptized? Baptism is a command of Christ (Mat. 28:19); and when a person who is saved desires baptism, he should be allowed to be baptized. If he is not allowed for some reason which has been determined by the church's leaders, are they not standing in the way of the new convert and his obedience to Christ? Absolutely! This is wrong! For this is the very thing which the Pharisees did (c.f., Mark 7:1-13).

When church leaders try to force change on a person before they baptize him, they need to understand that forced change is generally not a lasting change in a person's life. However, when a person is convicted by the Holy Spirit to make a change, then that change is usually lasting. Christian leaders need to make sure that they do not become as the Pharisees, expecting people to live up to their man-made rules; thus adding to the Word of God things which are not taught in the Bible (cf. Mat. 15:1-9). People cannot and should not try to take the place of the Holy Spirit in the lives of others! This is why church leaders need to allow the Holy Spirit to do His work in the new believer. I asked one group of pastors whom I taught, “If I could show everyone in this room a video of all the things in your life which you do

not want anyone else to know about you, things that you do and think about, would those here today baptize you? More importantly, would you baptize someone like yourself?" How would you answer this?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Today some church leaders teach that when they baptize a person their baptism is a continuance of John's baptism, and that people must be baptized by them to receive the true baptism. Do you agree with this? If so, how do you defend this from a biblical perspective?

2. What would you say to a person who comes into your church and says that according to Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, and 1 Peter 3:21, a person must be baptized to be saved? Would you consider what they say as heresy? After reading the appendix article on difficult passages related to baptism, please explain your answer, taking into account Galatians 1:6-10 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

3. The baptism of new believers:

   - When do they receive Spirit baptism (Acts 19:2; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:13; cf. Gal. 3:2; Rom. 8:9)?
   - When did Jesus tell His disciples to baptize new believers (Mat. 28:19)?
   - When were the new believers baptized whom Peter preached to on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37-41)?
   - When did Philip baptize the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:35-38)?
   - When should your church baptize new believers?

4. Is there a minimum age given in the Bible when a person can be baptized? If not, then what should be your church's guideline for when a person may be baptized?

5. What would you do if a person:

   - said that he was a believer but refused to be baptized?

- was baptized in a non-evangelical Christian church? Would you expect them to be baptized again?

- who shows all the signs of being a true believer wants to receive communion, but has not been baptized due to circumstances beyond his control (e.g., he is in prison, sick dying in a hospital, or because of the weather are not able to baptize him in a lake or river, etc.)? Would you allow him to receive communion? Please explain your answer.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. When will you baptize new believers -- immediately after salvation, or after a period of instruction? Please explain your answer below.

2. Will you allow unbaptized believers to serve in your church? If so, what positions will you allow them to serve in and which positions will you not allow them to serve in?

   Positions they can serve in:

   -
   -
   -
   -
   -

   Positions they cannot serve in:

   -
   -
   -
   -
   -

ORDINANCES:

Lord's Supper

Introduction:

The Lord's Supper for some is a mysterious sacrament of the church. For others, it is an ordinance which Christ gave the church as a remembrance of His death on the cross. As one considers both extremes and those views which lie in between, he needs only to study the various passages which speak about this event to come to a proper understanding of it.

In each of the gospels, the last Passover that Jesus spent with His disciples is recorded (Mat. 26:19-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-38; John 13:1-17:26). However it is only in the synoptic gospels that the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup is recorded (Mat. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20). This was the occasion when the Lord's Supper was established. These accounts give the reader an understanding as to why Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. He did it as a remembrance of His death for the forgiveness of sins. His death was the beginning of the new covenant which was made to the nation of Israel; it finding its complete fulfillment in the millennial kingdom (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:6-13; 9:15; 12:22-24). Yet it is in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 where one comes to better understand the meaning of this ordinance. Therefore 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 will be the main focus of this article.

Discussion of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34:

The book of 1 Corinthians is a book of correction, and in this portion of the book Paul continually corrected his readers. In the case of the Lord's Supper, Paul began by telling them that when they came together for their love feasts, at which time they shared communion, they did so in a manner which was unbefitting for the occasion (vs. 17). He could not praise such behavior (vs. 17) because when they came together there was division (vs. 18) and ungodly behavior (vss. 21-22) among them. Their ungodly behavior consisted of some of the church members acting selfishly, eating too much of the food and not leaving any for others; who as a result went hungry (vs. 21). Some were even drinking wine to excess and getting drunk (vs. 21). In so doing, Paul said that those who were guilty of such excesses were

"shaming" the poor of the church (vs. 22). They were humiliating them by this behavior because they were not considering and discerning the other believers' needs. This was very tragic and hypocritical as they had come together to remember an act of absolute selflessness that Jesus had done for mankind; and yet, they were doing it in an incredibly selfish manner. They were not concerned for their brothers and sisters in Christ as Jesus had been for them. This is why Paul ends the verse with the statement that he will not praise them, because what they were doing was so very wrong.

Following his rebuke, Paul then reminded the Corinthians of the words of Jesus which He spoke to His disciples at His last Passover with them (vss. 23-25). These same words Jesus had personally spoken to Paul as well, and Paul on a previous occasion had told them to the Corinthians (vs. 23). It is then that Paul stated in verse 26 that as often as this ordinance was practiced, the church will be proclaiming Christ's death until He comes (at the rapture of the church, John 14:1-3). Therefore this is a practice for the church which proclaims the most significant event in all of history.

Next, Paul warned them about their conduct in association with the Lord's Supper. He told them that if they participated in it in an unworthy manner, they "shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord." In other words, they will be liable or answerable ("guilty") for their actions, that of showing disrespect to Christ and for His sacrifice on the cross by their unacceptable treatment of fellow believers during love feasts. Paul continues this argument in verse 29: "For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly." Whereas in verse 27 he talks about the guilt of the person who does this, in verse 29 Paul talks about the judgment a person brings upon himself for this action. Therefore, in the context of these verses, it is clear that the "body" Paul is referring to in verse 29 is the same one spoken of in verse 27 -- Christ's own body which He gave for sin (1 Pet. 3:18). So according to verse 29, when a person does not "judge" or "discern" (NIV) Christ's sacrifice rightly -- not carefully evaluating its significance -- this person brings judgment to himself.

So that the Corinthians would not bring judgment upon themselves, Paul admonishes them in verse 28: "But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup." Paul told his readers to examine themselves first before partaking of the communion elements. In doing this, they would not again be guilty of repeating their previous actions toward their fellow believers in Christ (cf. vss. 18-21). Therefore since some of the Corinthians had not properly examined themselves or properly discerned the body and blood of Christ, some were weak, sick, or had died (vs. 30) because they had been judged by God (vs. 32). So when believers do "judge" themselves rightly (considering their behavior and acting appropriately; this being the end result of self-examination), Paul said that they will not be judged (vs. 31). Paul then concluded this section in verses 33 and 34 with the proper way in which believers are to care for their fellow believers in Christ at the love feasts. Simply, they were to show them love (cf. 1 Cor. 13:5) and put them first, just as Christ did for mankind (cf. Php. 2:3-4).

Application of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34:

This principle does not only apply to the communion service, but to all church life. If believers are not properly taking others into consideration, God will deal with them appropriately. Since many churches do not practice love feasts, the sin that Paul discussed would not occur. It could be possible though if during a communion service believers were disrespectful to one another and/or to the gathering of believers as a whole, or disrespectful in regards to the ordinance itself, that the sin Paul discussed would occur. But can this principle be applied to church dinners or picnics? Possibly, though if the Lord's Supper is not a part of these functions, I do not believe that the discipline of God would be as severe. In the love feasts, Christ's death was proclaimed (vss. 26-27), and it was the central and main focus of the event. That would not be the case during a church pot luck or picnic. (See the article titled, "Lord's Supper: Related Issues" in the Appendix).

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. How is your church characterized -- as a church of unity and peace, or one of disunity and division?

2. If your church is one of disunity and division as was the Corinthian church, what might be the cause of this condition within your church?

3. What was the main problem that took place in the Corinthian love feasts that Paul had to correct?

4. Since most churches do not practice love feasts today, what might be a similar offense that could bring God's discipline upon a believer in the communion service?

5. When should a new believer be allowed to partake of the communion service? Please explain your answer with Scripture.

6. Should any believer be allowed to partake of communion, or just people from your church? If only people from your church, then please explain using Scripture.

7. What should be the guideline for determining at what age a person is allowed to partake of communion? Please explain using Scripture.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. Below write a policy on the Lord's Supper which your church will follow. In this policy, incorporate the issues raised in application questions 5, 6 and 7 above. Also state in this policy other issues which you believe are important to the Lord's Supper, always validating what you say with the Word of God.

2. What explanation will you give to your congregation as to why they should examine themselves before receiving communion? Please keep in mind the reason Paul gave the Corinthians for why they should examine themselves. Be sure that your explanation is accurate according to Scripture.

MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH:

Worship

The purpose of worship:

Worship! Every church throughout the world would probably agree with the importance of worship, for the worship of God is of utmost importance. Because this is true, genuine worship should be the response desired from a believer; not worship that is contrived or fabricated. As a believer worships his God, his worship should flow naturally to the One who saved him; to the One who intimately knows and loves him. This is the type of worship that should flow from one's innermost self, being a natural component of who he is as a Christian. His worship is to be directed toward the Great and Awesome God whom he serves and not toward anything else (Deut. 4:24; Exo. 20:4-5; 1 Cor. 10:22; Col. 3:5). Such a response to his God is not only to take place while he is here on earth, but it will be a natural aspect of his life in eternity (cf. Isa. 6:1-4; Rev. 4:8-11; 5:8-14; 7:9-12; 11:15-17; 14:6-7).

When one thinks of worship he may want to consider it from the perspective of Malachi 1:6,8,14:

> 6 "'A son honors *his* father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?' says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, 'How have we despised Your name?'
> 8 "But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the Lord of hosts.
> 14 "But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord, for I am a great King," says the Lord of hosts, "and My name is feared among the nations."

The priests of Israel were offering to God poor quality sacrifices (blind, lame, sick). This God said was unacceptable because He is "a great King" whose "name is feared among the nations." God asked them, "Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" If an undesirable

sacrifice is not acceptable to a human ruler, then how much less is it acceptable to God? Therefore we should always offer our best to Him. Hebrews 13:15 tells us:

> "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name."

What is the quality of the worship in many churches? What is the quality of our "sacrifice of praise," "the fruit of our lips" with which we give thanks? Is it blind, sick and lame; or is it wholly acceptable, from the heart, done in spirit and truth (John 4:22-23)? This is a good question for church leaders to ask themselves in regards to their church's worship.

Planning worship:

Although worship should flow from the souls of true worshippers of God, often times worship services are anything but worshipful. Why is this the case? One reason may be the lack of thoughtful planning. As was stated previously, worship is not to be contrived or fabricated; yet worship needs to be planned. King David (1 Chron. 15:16-29), King Solomon (2 Chron. 5:11-14) and Nehemiah (Neh. 12:31-43) planned worship. To have creativity in a worship service takes both thought and planning. If a church does the same thing week after week, then the church members may become tired of the endless repetition. This is not how God meant it to be. Worship should not be stale and unchanging. It should be alive, tangible, and authentic; a reflection of a living and growing personal relationship with God. It should be an exciting experience.

The planning of a worship service, in one sense, can be compared to the preparation of a meal. Each meal that a person eats is somewhat different from the previous one, even though many times each meal generally consists of some of the same staple foods. Meals will vary depending upon the ingredients available, the utensils used to make it, and by the skill of the one who prepares it. The same is true of the worship service. Although the majority of what takes place in a worship service will not change from week to week, a worship service, like a meal, can vary depending upon the planning (or lack of it) which precedes the service. Did people take time to plan the service, look at the different ingredients available (people and skills; instruments) and bring them together in such a way that God is exalted and glorified? When a service is planned, the believers present can then participate in the worship of their God. It will be fresh, different, enjoyable and fulfilling -- just like a well-prepared meal -- not old, stale, and something that is all too familiar. Who likes to eat the same things meal after meal? No one! Who wants to sit in a church service week after week that is not alive or fresh? No one! Therefore a church needs to work at creating worship services that have substance and variety.

Having said these things, the worship time in church services should not be designed to create an emotional response from the people. A secular movie or novel can stimulate an emotional response. Worship that is based upon the true knowledge of God and His Word is what believers should respond to (cf. Psa. 139:6; Luke 10:20; Rom. 11:33-36; 1 Cor. 14:6). Therefore when believers respond to an act of God (cf. 2 Chron. 7:3; 20:5-19; e.g., answered prayer), or as an expression of joy (2 Chron. 29:20-30), or because of their hope in Christ (Rom. 12:12), or for

having been found worthy to suffer for Christ (Mat. 5:12; Acts 5:40-41; Php. 1:29), or simply rejoicing in all things (Php. 4:4; 1 Thes. 5:16), they are responding to legitimate reasons to praise and worship God. Any one of these things, or a combination of them, may result in a true emotional response. This is what should be desired. Worship which results from knowledge (may be associated with emotion), and not strictly from emotion (without knowledge), is true worship (cf. John 4:22-23). Simply stirring one's emotions for the sake of stimulating an emotional response is not a legitimate platform for worship. A person's emotions can make him do many things for many reasons, not all of them being God-honoring. This is why the worship of a believer should always be done in an attitude of holiness (cf. Psa. 96:9), with reverence (Psa. 2:10-12; 95:6), and in spirit and truth (John 4:22-23).

Reasons why worship may not be worshipful:

One reason worship services may not result in true worship could be that those who preach and teach are not working hard enough at their task (cf. 1 Tim. 5:17-18). If this is the case, then they also may not be handling accurately the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). As a result, the flock that they are in charge of (Act 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:3) may be poorly fed and spiritually starving. This happens when there is no nutrition in what they are being fed because no one takes the time necessary to prepare a healthy and appetizing message for them. The people continue to hear the same themes time and time again and may become disinterested. As a result, they do not respond in worship because they have not heard anything from the pulpit to respond to. If the messages are not biblically accurate, then they do not have any basis upon which to worship because what they hear is distorted. Such a situation is sad and all too common in our world today.

True worship may also be hindered in a church when each Sunday the message is a platform for evangelism. In other words, the church members hear the same theme of evangelism over and over again and are not being fed from the whole of God's Word, but just one segment of it. As important as evangelism is, church members need to be taught all the things that Jesus taught, not just some of them (Mat. 28:19); as well as the entire Word of God. It is important to remember that believers are to be gathered to be fed, encouraged and refreshed (cf. John 17:17; 1 Tim. 4:6, 13-16; Heb. 10:24-25), and then they are to be scattered to do evangelism (cf. Mat. 28:19). The majority of evangelism should be done outside the church building by the well-equipped church members (Eph. 4:11-16), and not in the walls of the church by its leaders.

Another reason that true worship may be hindered in a person's life is simply that he is not walking closely with the Lord. As a result of this condition, he is not stimulated by God's Word, and he does not respond by worshipping Him. This can occur when sin creeps into a believer's life, negatively affecting his spirituality. Sin can do this because it carries with it a penalty (James 1:14-16; 4:1-10); a penalty which can blind a believer (Psa. 40:12), take away his joy, and make him spiritually ineffective (cf. Psalm 51:10,12-13). When this occurs, the Holy Spirit is grieved (cf. Eph. 4:30) and His work in this person's life is quenched (cf. 1 Thes. 5:19). Therefore this believer's joy is extinguished like a fire that has been doused with water. This is the reason a growing and dynamic walk with Christ is so important to

one's worship of the Father; for even then in difficult situations a person with a growing faith can and will worship God (cf. Hab. 3:16-19; Acts 4:18-24; 5:40-41; 16:22-25; Eph. 5:18-21).

Ultimately worship, or the lack of it, is a manifestation of what is in a person's heart. It is what is in a person's heart which defiles (Mat. 15:18-20; Luke 16:15) and condemns him (1 John 3:17-21), or what justifies him (cf. Psa. 24:3-5; 2 Tim 2:22; 1 Pet. 1:22; 3:4; 1 John 3:17-21). Possibly then, the results of a church's worship may very well be an indication to its leaders of the spiritual condition of their church. If the people's hearts are neglected, worship will be lacking. If their hearts are filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, their worship will reflect this through meaningful and joyous worship. God's children are to give God the glory due Him (Psa. 29:2); and although this does not and will not always happen in this life, one day in the future all created beings will do so (cf. Psa. 66:4; Php. 2:9-11 [Jesus]).

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. On the scale below, please rate how you view your corporate worship by circling the appropriate number?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Very Poor				Average					Excellent

2. Identify the main reason why you believe that your church deserves this rating?

3. If your church needs to improve in its worship, what needs to be done to do this?

   a. Better planning of worship
   b. Better preparation and delivery of sermons
   c. Preaching of the whole Bible and not just favorite themes
   d. Growth in the spiritual lives of the members
   e. A different issue: _____

4. Is the worship leader of your church skilled in the planning and leading of worship? If not, is there training available or someone you know who could help this person do a better job? Should someone else take over this ministry? Write your thoughts below.

5. If you rated your church as having worship in the range of very poor to average, and you believe the reason for this is that it is a reflection of the spiritual condition of its members, please give your thoughts below on how to correct this situation.

6. List below those things that your church does to encourage worship.

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7. List below those things that your church does to hinder worship.

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8. What things could your church do to encourage more healthier, meaningful worship?

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SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. Have you determined what styles of music you will or will not allow in your church? If you have, what guidelines have you used to make this decision? Did you use supracultural principles, cultural or a combination of the two? Summarize your policy below in two or three sentences.

   NOTE: If you have not decided what limits your church will allow for music, or you have decided but have not considered scriptural principles about music, then take the time to search the Bible on this topic (see the appendix article titled, “Music”). Remember, if you allow broad parameters when you start your church, it will be difficult to close the gap later if you decide to do so. This is why it is so important to make wise decisions in the beginning.

2. Have you considered ways in which you can vary the order of worship in your services so that you have diversity and not uniformity week after week? What are your thoughts?

3. One's attitude in worship ultimately is an issue of the heart. What plan do you have to cultivate the hearts of new believers so that worship is a natural manifestation of their faith? What are the key issues?

4. How conservative or contemporary do you want your church to be? Define your limits. What scriptural principles will guide you?

MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH:

Fellowship

Importance of fellowship:

Fellowship within the local church is fundamental to its design and functionality (cf. 1 Cor. 12:24-26). Fellowship, which conveys the idea of things shared in common between individuals, expresses the bond believers have as the result of their faith (cf. Eph. 4:1-6). It is this bond which is a crucial characteristic of the local church and which affects its stability, strength (cf. Eccl. 4:9-12) and ability to impact its members (cf. Pro. 27:17) and the world (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-6; Php. 2:15) in which it exists. Without fellowship, the local church would be impotent and ineffective.

Essence and basis of fellowship:

The essence and basis of fellowship between Christians is Jesus Christ, not simply God. This is true because if a Christian's basis for fellowship is strictly God, then he can have fellowship with Muslims, Hindus, Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, etc., for they all state that they have faith in God. But for the true believer who holds a biblically-based view of Jesus, Jesus is the center and focus of his fellowship. The Apostle John clearly demonstrated this truth when he spoke to his readers in 1 John about the basis of fellowship between them and the apostles. It is their relationship with Jesus that he gave as the basis for their mutual fellowship (1 John 1:1-2). It is this relationship which established the apostle's fellowship, not only with Jesus and with his readers, but with God the Father as well (1 John 1:3). Therefore, since fellowship is a relationship which is based upon Christ and Him alone, it is therefore a relationship which can only exist between Christians. It is not a relationship that can be shared among unbelievers (John 8:44) or between believers and unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14). This is why ecumenicalism -- the unity among all religions and faiths -- is unscriptural.

Inherent aspect of fellowship:

Fellowship should be a natural and intrinsic part of a believer's life. So, if a person claims to be a Christian and does not love the brethren and/or does not desire to fellowship with them, then it is appropriate to question whether this person truly knows the Father (1 John 4:7-21). If this person truly is a believer, then one can rightfully assume that he is struggling in his faith. This is true because fellowship is common to all believers (cf. 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 13:14; Php. 2:1; 1 John 1:7). It cannot be separated from who they are and is therefore something they should not forsake (Heb 10:24-25).

Because of the intricacy of fellowship in the Christian faith, the cultivation of fellowship is important within the local church. Although fellowship exists at the core of a person's faith as soon as he becomes a Christian, the relational aspect of fellowship needs to be cultivated. If left to chance, the deeper levels of fellowship may not develop for many reasons. This is why church leaders need to work at encouraging and developing fellowship within the body. The deeper the Christ-centered relationships grow, the stronger the church will grow. Even though this should be the case, it is to be expected that unhealthy relationships can develop and grow in a church as well. Therefore the leaders need to be circumspect, working at keeping this from occurring.

Cultivation of fellowship:

Fellowship within the local church can be cultivated in many ways. For example, an act as simple as having people shake hands with other people sitting around them during a worship service can encourage fellowship. Although this is a little thing, it can help believers begin to feel more comfortable with others they do not know in the church. It can be a catalyst to conversation, which later could lead to friendship, and ultimately to the deeper goal of fellowship. Also, planning events inside and outside the church can also stimulate fellowship. Inside the church such things as Bible studies, on books of the Bible or on specific issues, can cultivate fellowship. Developing discipleship groups and men’s and women’s groups are also helpful. Events outside the church that people enjoy such as attending concerts, operas, bike rides, walks, picnics, or other excursions can also help draw people together and be a catalyst to deeper fellowship. The church leaders need to think through these issues and work at making fellowship an intricate and important part of their church.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. What are your church's guidelines for what other types of churches it will fellowship with? Are they written or unwritten guidelines?

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2. Are all of the guidelines listed above biblical? Go back to question number 1 and list Scripture passages next to each guideline that clearly shows that it is actually biblical. If any of the guidelines are not biblical, please justify why your church should follow them.

3. Do you have specific standards on whom you will personally fellowship with? Are your standards the same as your church's or different? Are they more or less restrictive? Are they biblical?

4. Within your church what types of things are being done on a regular basis to encourage fellowship (weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly)?

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5. What could your church do to promote more fellowship?

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6. What could be done in your church to stimulate deeper levels of fellowship?

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7. Does your church have events that are planned according to age groups for the purpose of stimulating fellowship (i.e., children, teenagers, college students, young married couples, middle-aged people, seniors)? If not, what are some events that your church could organize?

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8. Does your church organize events to stimulate fellowship according to other characteristics such as events for singles, for men, for women, for families, for people who share areas of interest (e.g., sewing, child rearing, gardening, fishing, sports, computers, etc.)? If not, please list some ideas of events that your church could organize to promote fellowship among such people groups.

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9. If your church is too small to organize some of these things mentioned above, are there other churches that you could involve in these events? Involving other churches would not only stimulate fellowship within your church, but also between the churches. List some potential churches below.

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10. Though age and/or interest-oriented fellowship events are important, it is also important to stimulate fellowship between all ages of people in your church. Doing this will help keep the church unified and not cause division, especially between its youth and the elderly. What are some things which your church can do to encourage fellowship between its various age groups?

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SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. What can you do to integrate fellowship into the lives and practice of new believers and into the routine of your new church from the beginning?

   New believers:

   Church:

2. How can you model fellowship in a way to encourage others to follow your example?

3. Have you written a policy with guidelines on which kinds of churches your church will fellowship with and which ones it will not? List some scripture passages below which will help you in this process.

MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH:

Giving

Importance and necessity of giving:

Consistent and regular giving is important to the smooth operation of a church. Without this, it is difficult to plan (cf. Pro. 21:5) to make sure that bills will be paid (cf. Rom. 13:8) and commitments met (cf. Mat. 5:37). Even though many times believers need to hear messages preached on this topic, pastors may choose not do so because they do not like to talk about money. Yet, the giving of one's resources is important to the faith of a believer as it is a manifestation of his faith (cf. Jam. 2:14-26). Therefore, if a person claims to be a Christian but does not give, then there is the possibility that he is not a true believer in Christ (2 Cor. 9:13; Jam. 2:14-26). Christians, who are children of God and followers of Christ, should be generous givers (Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 9:6,8-9; Pro. 22:9; 1 Tim. 6:17-18), even sacrificial givers (cf. Luke 21:1-4; 2 Cor. 8:1-5), reflecting the character of their Father (John 3:16; Rom. 8:31-32; 2 Cor. 9:15) and Savior (Mark 10:45; Rom. 8:32). Therefore, a Christian who gives expresses his faith through his act of giving (2 Cor. 9:13). The pastor, however, who does not teach on the biblical principles of giving is not helping those under his care grow and mature in that area of their faith. This is tragic.

It is important that church members give to their church for the purpose of supporting its ministries. Their giving will pay for such things as: the pastor's salary (1 Cor. 9:1-14; 1 Tim. 5:17-18), evangelism and the sending out of cross-cultural missionaries (cf. Mat. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 13:1-3; Php. 4:15-16), the support of widows (1 Tim. 5:5,7,9-10), helping people in need (Acts 2:44; 4:32-35; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:13-15; Gal. 2:10; 6:9-10; Heb. 13:16; cf. Deut. 15:7-11; Mat. 5:42), building upkeep, utility bills, etc. Without the faithful giving of its members, the church and its ministries would not be able to function. It is important to note that the financial support of the church is to come from believers. Money should never be solicited by the church from unbelievers for this reason (2 Cor. 6:14-15; cf. 3 John 5-8).

From the money collected each week, it is important that the church pay the pastor a salary. The Apostle Paul made this point very clear in 1 Corinthians 9:1-14. In this passage, Paul made three points: 1) he had the right to be paid a salary as a

minister of the gospel (vss. 3-7); 2) the laborer has the right to share in the fruits of his labor (vss. 8-10); and 3) those who proclaim the gospel have the right to make their living from the gospel (vss. 11-14). This passage is as true today as it was during the time of the Apostle Paul. Any church that does not pay its pastor a salary is negligent.

The pastor's salary:

How much money should a church pay its pastor? The general rule for many churches is that the pastor's salary should be equal to the average salary earned by the people of his church. Other churches may look at what the average salary is for a professional who has the same amount of education and similar responsibilities, and pay their pastor accordingly. Whereas both of these methods have merit, the church needs to remember that the job of the pastor is not a regular job. It is a spiritual job where he is in battle with the evil one on almost a daily basis. Also, his job is not from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. He generally is on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; and he is always expected to be there for the people of the church when they are in need. The pastor has to deal with issues behind the scenes that often the people of the church are unaware of. At times the pastor has to deal with situations that are very difficult, sensitive, complicated, and sometimes even bizarre. In his job, he may hear things that he doesn't want to have to hear and deal with situations he would rather not have to deal with. But because he is the pastor, many of these things fall upon him. This is why it is important for the pastor to have godly, qualified elders working alongside him in the ministry; to be there to help him in these difficult times. Therefore when deciding upon a salary, the church needs to take these things into consideration and make sure that whatever salary they pay their pastor, it is sufficient to meet his needs. The pastor should not have to find himself in situations where he has to send his family to bed hungry, cannot purchase needed clothing, cannot pay his monthly bills or afford necessary doctor visits, cannot save for the future, or be able to take his family on a yearly vacation. A pastor's family who lives a meager existence may be negatively affected, especially the children. Due to such a life, they may never want to be involved in full-time ministry, but instead may want to seek riches due to the difficulty of their childhood. According to the Apostle Paul: "The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says: 'YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,' and 'The laborer is worthy of his wages'" (1 Tim. 5:17-18). The pastor therefore needs to receive an adequate salary.

Are the poor able to give?

What if the people of the church are too poor to give? Giving is not related to how much a person earns or has. Giving is an issue of the heart. One day when Jesus was with His disciples, He brought to their attention the generous act of a poor widow who most likely went unnoticed by everyone else. This event is recorded in Luke 21:1-4: "And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, 'Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all *of them;* for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live

on.'" How is it that this poor widow could put into the offering the last two copper coins which she had to live on? Because she was giving from her heart to God, not from her surplus, and was trusting God to take care of her needs.

This point is made even clearer when looking at the example of the Macedonians. When Paul had written to the Corinthians about the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Cor. 16:3), Paul mentioned the generosity of the Macedonians (2 Cor. 8:1-5). In 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, Paul stated that the Macedonian believers were experiencing affliction and deep poverty at the time of the offering for those in Jerusalem (vs. 2). Yet Paul said that it was the result of their abundant joy and deep poverty which resulted in them giving liberally (vs. 2). Paul said: "For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints" (vss. 3-4). Therefore out of their deep poverty they begged for the opportunity to give, which they did up and beyond their ability. As Paul testified, "and *this,* not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God" (vs. 5). They were able to give up and beyond even what Paul had thought possible because they had given themselves wholeheartedly to God, to Paul and those assisting him. Therefore through the grace of God (vs. 1) and according to their desire (vss. 3-4), the poor gave to the needs of the poor. As a believer matures in his faith, drawing closer to God, he too will become more generous toward the needs of his church and others.

Encourage giving:

The pastor needs to encourage the people of his church to give. In the Old Testament, a tithe was required by God of a man's total produce (Deut. 14:22); grain, new wine and oil (Deut. 14:23). The tithe was holy to the Lord (Lev. 27:30), and it was to be used to supply the needs of the Levites "in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting" (Num. 18:21). Those who did not give of their tithe, God said were robbing Him and were cursed for doing so (Mal. 3:8-9). Yet He told them to test Him: "'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,' says the LORD of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast *its grapes,*' says the LORD of hosts. 'All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,' says the LORD of hosts" (Mal. 3:10-12). Those in the nation of Israel who trusted God with their tithe were blessed by Him, the same principle which is repeated in the New Testament.

Tithing:

Although in the Old Testament a tithe was required of the people of Israel, in the New Testament there is not a specified amount believers are required to give to their church. Instead, when Paul was taking up the offering for the poor in Jerusalem, he told the Corinthians: "On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2). They were instructed to lay aside money for the offering in

direct proportion to how they had prospered. So on Sunday (Saturday being the seventh day) believers were to consider how God had prospered them during the past week; and then in proportion to that, set money aside for the offering. Also, in 2 Corinthians 9, Paul further told the Corinthians: "Now this *I say,* he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:6-7). The point here is that a person will be blessed in proportion to how he gives. If he gives sparingly, he will reap sparingly. If he is generous in his giving, then God will be generous to him. God does not want people giving "grudgingly" (when they do not want to) "or under compulsion" (when they feel they have to). God desires that the giver be a "cheerful giver," giving joyfully. As a person gives cheerfully and generously, God will continue to supply more, multiplying what He gives him even before he uses it, resulting in the maximum distribution and impact of the believer's resources (2 Cor. 9:10).

New Testament giving:

How much money should a Christian give to his church? The author's personal conviction is that since the people of Israel gave a tithe -- ten percent -- of their gross income, so the Christian should begin here. It seems that a tithe was a standard in Old Testament times because even before the Law of Moses was given, Abraham paid a tithe to Melchizedek, the King of Salem who "was a priest of God Most High" (Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 7:6-10). Beginning with a tithe, a person should continue to give up and beyond that as God prospers him (cf. 1 Cor. 16:2). When a person gives, he should always give to God first, for in so doing he honors God (Pro. 3:9-10). When God comes first, then the believer's other needs will be met (cf. Php. 4:15-19). Therefore, giving is an act of faith. When believers live this way, specifically when one gives to God first before purchasing food, paying bills etc., he is walking by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:17). This is the reason why giving is such a test and evidence of one's faith; for the person who gives to God first is placing his trust in Him, not in his money and possessions. As Jesus said: "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (Luke 16:13).

The pastor/elders are the ones who need to set the example of giving in the church (1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7; 1 Pet. 5:3). They are not to boast about how much they give (Mat. 6:1-4), but their example should be one of generosity; having a hope fixed on God, free from the love of money (1 Tim. 3:3; 1 Pet. 5:2-3; cf. 1 Tim. 6:17-19). Their example, along with the exhortations from the Word of God, should motivate people to give, not because they feel coerced by their leaders to do so (2 Cor. 9:7). The giving of a person's resources is to be an offering which is given freely to God by him (Php. 4:18; Heb. 13:16), acknowledging that God is the source of all that he has in the first place (cf. Php. 4:19; Jam. 1:17). Below I have provided some biblical financial principles. Though some go beyond the topic of giving which this chapter addresses, I have added them for your consideration.

1. **Believers are to be good stewards (All that we own comes from and belongs to God):**
    - God is the source of our wealth - James 1:17
    - All that God gives us we will have to account for one day - Mat. 25:14,19
    - God will bless the faithful steward - Luke 16:10-13
2. **Money is not to be our master; God is:**
    - Do not pursue wealth - Prov. 23:4-5
    - Do not store up treasures on earth - Mat. 6:19
    - Store up treasures in heaven - Mat. 6:20
    - Where one's treasure is his heart will be - Mat. 6:21
    - No one can serve both God and wealth - Mat. 6:24
3. **Be content:**
    - Asking God to meet your needs - Prov. 30:7-9
    - Because God will meet your needs - Mat. 6:25-33; Php. 4:19
    - With your wages - Luke 13:14
    - In whatever circumstance you are in - Php. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 6:6-11
    - Because God is with you - Heb. 13:5
4. **Be generous:**
    - Sacrificial giving begins with giving yourself to God first - 2 Cor. 8:1-5; cf. Luke 21:1-4
    - Give in accordance to how God has blessed you - 1 Cor. 16:2
    - Because this is righteous behavior - Psa. 37:21
    - God will provide for your future needs - 1 Tim. 6:18-19
    - In proportion to your giving God will give back to you - 2 Cor. 9:6-7
    - God will abundantly meet your needs and multiply your seed and harvest - 2 Cor. 9:8-12
    - It confirms your faith - 2 Cor. 9:13-15
5. **Give discreetly so that God will reward you** - Mat. 6:1-4
6. **Don't forget God in times of financial blessings** - Deut. 6:10-12
7. **Be thankful to God and rejoice in everything** - Deut. 8:10, Php. 4:4; 1 Thes. 5:16-18
8. **Plan, prepare and save for the future:**
    - Do not consume all that you have; save for future needs - Prov. 21:20
    - It is wise to discern and plan for what lies ahead in the future - Deut. 32:28-29; Prov. 6:6-11
    - What you have today will not last forever - Prov. 27:23-24
    - You will have what is needed when necessary - Luke 14:28-33
    - Understand as you plan that God is the One who is in control of your future - Jam. 4:13-15
9. **Do not become security for another man's loan:**
    - If you have done this deliver yourself quickly - Prov. 6:1-5
    - By doing this you may lose everything you have - Prov. 22:26-27
    - To do so shows a lack of wisdom -- Prov. 17:18
10. **Be careful about borrowing:**
    - You may become a slave to your debt (to the creditor) - cf. Prov. 22:7
    - You may lose much or all that you have - cf. Mat. 18:23-25
11. **Pay those whom you owe:**
    - The government, creditors, etc. - Rom. 13:7-8
    - Those who work for you - Deut. 24:14-15; cf. Jam. 5:4

For more information on giving, please see the article titled, "The Spiritual Disciplines."

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Have messages been preached in your church on the topic of giving?

2. If messages were preached, what was the response of the people to the messages?

3. If the response was not good, why do you think that the people responded the way in which they did?

4. When speaking on the topic of giving, does your church take a strong stand that people are required to tithe, or do they teach that people are to be cheerful givers who are not to give grudgingly or under compulsion? What difference could this make in the attitude of the givers?

5. Are you as a church leader setting the example of giving cheerfully and generously? What about the other leaders in your church?

6. Does your church pay its pastor a salary? If so, is it sufficient for him and his family to live on?

7. How much money would your church need to collect each month to support its pastor, pay its utility bills, and support its ministries?

   Pastor's salary: _____

   Utilities: _____

   Church ministries: _____

   TOTAL: _____

8. If everyone in your church tithed, would they be able to collect each month the total amount of money you listed in question number 7?

9. Now compose a plan of things which your leaders can do to help the members of your church understand that the words of Jesus are true: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

10. If you were to preach a series of messages on the topic of giving, what passages would you use? What would be the main idea that you would emphasize in each passage? Please list the passage and its main idea next to it.

    -
    -
    -
    -
    -

11. Is there a project that the members of your church could work on together to promote giving and the blessings that accompany this act? What ideas do you have for possible projects? What might be some ways which you could give evidence to the accompanied blessings of the givers?

    Projects:

    -
    -
    -

    Ways to evidence blessings:

    -
    -
    -
    -
    -

12. What do you think about asking unbelievers for money to support your church? Please answer this question with Scripture references.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. How will you encourage new believers, who are not used to giving generously to a church, to give generously to your church without making them think that you just want their money?

2. How will you determine when you should start drawing a salary from your church? How will you determine how much you should receive? Since this may not be a normal practice in your country, how will you help your new church to understand that this is a biblical principle?

3. At what point in your church's development will you introduce the idea of supporting missionaries? At what point will you actually begin supporting them?

4. What safeguards will you put in place from the beginning so that your church's finances will not be mishandled? How will you make sure that you are never in a situation where you could be accused of mishandling money?

MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH:

Service

The believer's example of service:

Service is a very important aspect of the body of Christ and of the individual believer's personal faith. It is a demonstration of his faith, just as the manifestation of love and the fruit of the Spirit are. James is poignant about the necessity of a person manifesting his faith through his works when he wrote: "What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?" (Jam. 2:14). The answer obviously is "No!" Therefore as a believer serves, he is manifesting his faith in a practical manner in which God meant it to be expressed.

The ultimate example of a servant for the believer is Jesus Christ. Jesus stated: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). The giving of His life was the greatest act of service He could perform, and it is His desire that His disciples follow His example. This was evidenced that on the very night before He was taken to be tried and crucified, He washed His disciples' feet (John 13:1-5) as an example of serving others. He told them: "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you" (John 13:15).

It was never Jesus' desire that believers exalt themselves, looking to others to serve them; not even Jesus, who was worthy to be served, had this attitude in Himself (Luke 22:27; Php. 2:3-8). The Gentiles, on the other hand, were known for lording it over others. The disciples of Jesus desired to do this as well, but He spoke against such behavior (Mark 10:35-45). Jesus made it clear that those who desire to be first in this life will be last in the next, and those who are willing to be last in this life will be first in the next (Mat. 19:30; 20:16; Mark 9:35).

The body of Christ was designed for service:

The fact that the body of Christ was designed for service is quite evident in 1 Corinthians 12. When speaking about spiritual gifts, Paul states:

> "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons.* But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (vss. 4-7).

Spiritual gifts which are described as "the manifestation of the Spirit" are given to each believer. Why? For the "common good" of the body of Christ. For this reason the Holy Spirit gives a "variety of gifts" so that there will be a "variety of ministries" which will yield a "variety of effects." It is for this reason that each believer is to use his or her spiritual gift in service. It is essential that believers understand that each part of the body is important. They are important. Their spiritual gift is important.

> "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not *a part* of the body,' it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body. And if the ear says, 'Because I am not an eye, I am not *a part* of the body,' it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?" (vss. 14-17).

One part of the body is not more important than another, even though the amount of responsibilities it has may differ, for one cannot function to its fullest extent without the other members. Paul said in verses 24 and 25: "But God has *so* composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that *member* which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another." It is therefore vital that each member understands that the gift he possesses is necessary for the body of Christ to function. The members need to covet and use the spiritual gift given them by the Holy Spirit (vs. 11), as well as their position in the body of Christ which was given to them by God. Paul wrote in verses 18-19:

> "But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be?"

Believers also need to understand that within the body of Christ there is to be unity, as Paul further stated:

> "But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you" (vss. 20-21).

As stated earlier, each part of the body is necessary to the functioning of the body. Each part of the body must appreciate and respect the other members. They are never to look down upon the weaker members for each one is important (vss. 22-25). So when considering the importance of service in the body of Christ, please remember that the body was designed to work together. It was designed as a diversified yet unified unit. When working together by the grace of God it can accomplish much because of this fact. However when it or parts of it are not functioning properly within a local church, Christ's grace is not flowing and much precious time is wasted and results are not realized. This is why the role of the pastor and evangelist is so important in the equipping ministry of the local church --

to make sure that the body is being equipped so that it will function effectively. (See chapter, “The Pastor and Evangelist’s Equipping Ministry.”)

Equipping the church for service:

Equipping the body of Christ for service is the task of the pastor and evangelist (Eph. 4:12). This is their function. Therefore it is very important that they model service to those they are equipping (1 Pet. 5:3; 2 Thes. 3:7-9). Their example will speak louder than their words (cf. Jam. 2:14-26; 1 John 3:18). They should not expect the people of their church to serve them because of their special position within the body of Christ. Instead, they were placed in their position to serve the body (cf. 2 Cor. 4:5). As Jesus stated, “...but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant” (Luke 22:26). Becoming a church leader is to become not only the least, but a servant as well. If a church leader does not have this attitude, he needs to be careful, for the Scriptures state: “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (Jam. 4:6).

It is important that a servant keeps in mind who he is and Whom he serves. Doing this will help him keep in perspective and in practice the proper attitude of a servant. It is God the Father and Christ Jesus His Son whom he serves (Eph. 6:7; Col. 3:24); therefore he is to work out his salvation with fear and trembling (Php. 2:12), without grumbling and complaining, appearing as a light in the world (Php. 2:14-16). It is God who created him and determined in eternity past the good works which he should do (Eph. 2:10). These good works are to be the fruit of his salvation, and the reason that God is at work in him (Php. 2:13). Nothing is to come between him and his service for his Master Jesus because he can only serve one master (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13). He should not have divided loyalties. If he does willingly serve Christ and others in love (Gal. 5:13), then he will be honored by the Father for his faithful service (John 12:26).

Reasons why service is important:

Service is very important to the body of Christ for at least three major reasons: 1) it brings glory to God, 2) it builds up the body of Christ, and 3) it is a platform for and a means of evangelism.

First and foremost, a believer’s service brings glory to God if it is done for Him (1 Cor. 10:31). This is a result of service, because when a servant manifests good works in his life, he resembles a light which is set on a hill in the darkness for all to see. His acts of service to others, which are ultimately done for God (cf. Mat. 25:45), give glory to Him (Mat. 5:14-16).

The second major reason service is important in the body of Christ is the impact it has on the body of Christ. Service builds up the body through love (Eph. 4:16). It is through love which unifies the body (Col. 2:2; 3:14) that believers build each other up and are built up in their faith as the body of Christ is joined together in service. This occurs because as believers serve, various needs in the body are being met (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-7,24-27; 2 Cor. 1:3-7; 9:12; Gal. 6:2). This has the effect of strengthening those who are the recipients of the service as well as those who are

performing it. Service also encourages those who benefit from it, which according to Hebrews 3:13, helps keep believers from becoming hardened by sin. This is true because acts of service are a manifestation of love, and love penetrates hearts.

The third reason given is that as believers show love through their acts of service, this shows others that they are Christ's disciples (John 13:34-35). This results in a platform for and as a means of evangelism. This is true because serving one another can be a humbling task, as when Jesus washed the feet of His disciples (John 13:5-17). It is through one's acts of service that a message is proclaimed to those who observe, a message of the person's love for those whom he is serving. As people see this humble act of love displayed, they will know that this person is a disciple of Christ. As was stated earlier, they are like a light set on a hill which shines forth the light of Christ (Mat. 5:14-16). In relation to this, believers need to remember that they are to serve in such a way that they are not practicing their righteousness before men to be noticed by them (Mat. 5:1). When they serve Christ with a proper motivation, and people observe them, this could be a platform for those observing to hear the gospel and believe. One needs to remember that as he takes the gospel to others, he is serving through this act. It is through acts of service that the gospel is advanced (Php. 2:22,30). Without the effort of believers, the gospel would not be spread (cf. Rom. 10:14-15). Taking the gospel to those where they live, or even to the end of the earth, is a service to the recipients of the message as well as to the Lord.

Service is crucial to the growth of a believer's faith. Without such opportunities, he will never become all that he can be in Christ. Instead he may become inwardly focused and selfish, no longer concerned about others and their needs, but only his own.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Do you as a church leader set a good example of what it means to be a servant, or do you look to people to serve you? Before you answer this question, please consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 23:2-7 and John 13:12-17.

2. What kind of an example do your leaders set of serving others?

3. In your church, who is the most humble servant? Why? What qualities does he or she display? Please describe this person below.

4. What are some specific things that you can do to become more of a servant in your home, in your church, and in your community?

   Home:
   -
   -
   -

   Church:
   -
   -
   -

   Community:
   -
   -
   -

5. What are some specific things that your church leaders can do to encourage the people of your church to be come servants?

   •
   •
   •
   •
   •
   •

6. What are some specific acts of service that the members of your church can do to serve the surrounding community?

   •
   •
   •
   •
   •
   •

7. List some areas of service within your church in which you need someone to serve. Then under each area list people who you believe are gifted and able to work in each of these positions. If the positions are leadership positions, make sure that the people you consider are spiritually qualified.

   Area of service: _____
   •
   •
   •

   Area of service: _____
   •
   •
   •

   Area of service: _____
   •
   •
   •

8. What are some ways you can encourage the people whom you listed above to consider serving in these areas?

   •

   •

   •

   •

   •

9. If you were to preach some messages on service, which Bible texts would you choose? When will you preach these messages?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. How will you make sure that you raise up servant leaders within your church? What are the two most important things which you can do to assure this will happen?

2. What is the most important example of service which you can model in your church? In other words, for whom will this service be done? How will you do this?

   If you are a married man:

   If you are a single man:

MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH:

Outreach

Mobilizing church members:

Mobilizing church members to speak to unbelievers about Christ can be a difficult task, yet it is the task of the evangelist and pastor-teacher (cf. Eph. 4:11-13; see the article titled, "Pastor's and Evangelist's Equipping Ministry "). They have been called by God to equip the saints for service. It is not sufficient to simply tell the members of the church that it is their responsibility to evangelize, but it is the evangelist's and/or pastor-teacher's job to train them to do this.

Training church members:

Often people do not speak to others about Christ due to fear. Therefore it is the job of the evangelist and pastor-teacher to help them overcome their fears. One way this can be accomplished is through training (discipling) believers in methods of evangelism. Teaching them methods which can be easily utilized to speak to people about Christ will give confidence. This can be accomplished by holding evangelism classes where church members are introduced to a method or methods of evangelism. This should include such things as a discussion of the basic elements of the gospel, necessary Bible verses one needs to know to accurately and fully share the gospel, how to answer people's questions about the gospel, and apologetical arguments related to the gospel. (See the article in the appendix titled, "Mobilizing Members for Evangelism") Teaching them how to write their testimony about how they came to Christ in a concise manner that they can share with others is also very useful. These things, along with role-playing in the training sessions, will be very beneficial. As a part of the training, the trainer should invite people from the class to go along with him when he goes to speak to people about Christ. This will help them see how to apply the things they are being taught. Through such opportunities, people's fears of sharing their faith in Christ can be removed and replaced with confidence. Then, encouraging the class members to pray and look for opportunities, to use what they are learning will not only help them apply their new knowledge, but will also create excitement as they report back about opportunities they had to share Christ. Such testimonies will then motivate other

people to think and pray about whom they will attempt to share the gospel with and who will trust in Christ as their Savior.

Though evangelism can be the focus of a church's worship services, this should not be the norm. When the church gathers, the believers need to be taught, encouraged, and refreshed. Then after the service when they scatter, as they are going along their way, they should be involved in making disciples (Mat. 28:19). If the church service is continually used for the purpose of evangelism, then the members will continue to hear the same basic message over and over week after week. This will cause them to be stunted in their spiritual growth as they are not hearing the whole of the Word of God. It may also cause them to depend upon the church and its pastor to do the work of evangelism by means of the church services; in their minds removing their personal responsibility. All they have to do is invite people to church so they can hear the message there, which may be the extent of their evangelistic efforts. This should not be the case. The Apostle Paul told his readers in 2 Corinthians 5:20: "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." This is the task of every believer. Each believer is an ambassador for Christ. As an ambassador, it is his duty to take and deliver the message of the One who sent him, that being Christ. What is the message he is to take? It is, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them" for "He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (vss. 19, 21). As believers scatter, they are to take this message to the world (Mat. 28:18; Acts 1:8); to those people who will never visit a church. This is God's plan; God's desire.

Reaching the father of the home for Christ:

When evangelizing, it seems advantageous when possible to try to reach the father of the household first in contrast to his wife and/or children. In the Scriptures when a man believed, it was normal for his entire family to convert by following his example (cf. Acts 10:44-48; 16:31-34). This was not always the case when the mother of the home believed. Generally the husband will not follow her lead, and the children may not as well, depending on their ages. Having said this, it is important to share the gospel with whomever will listen. It is the believer's job to sow seed with the hope that it will produce fruit (Mat. 13:1-9,18-23). Many times women are much more open to the things of God, and the sower needs to sow the Word where the soil is prepared. Yet the sower should not forget the husband, for it is far better if both of them come to Christ together.

Reaching children for Christ:

Reaching out to children, even young children, with the gospel is important but often neglected in some churches. One reason for this is that some think children are not able to believe and accept Christ until they are older, maybe 13 or 14 years old. It is then, these people believe, that a person can make a rational decision to accept Christ and be baptized. Such thinking is incorrect and unbiblical. Please notice Jesus' response to the following incident which involved children: "And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples

rebuked them. But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, 'Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all.*' And He took them in His arms and *began* blessing them, laying His hands on them" (Mark 10:13-16). It is interesting that the very thing Jesus said a person needs to possess to enter the kingdom of God is the very thing children possess -- faith and trust. Children are very trusting and believe adults readily. It is as they grow and experience life that they come to understand that they cannot and should not trust and believe every person and everything they hear. They become more desensitized and indoctrinated by the world with age. Actually, it is when children are young that they are the most receptive to the gospel as they are yet untouched by the world; that is if they have not experienced something terrible to the contrary. It is then that they are willing to listen to, understand and accept the simple message of the cross. Children as young as three years old have accepted Christ as their Savior. This is possible because the message of the cross is simple and uncomplicated to them. All a child needs to understand is that he is a sinner, that Christ died for his sins and rose again, that salvation is through faith, and that hell awaits the one who does not ask Jesus to be his Savior. Though this message is simple, it becomes much more difficult to accept as a person matures and begins to be influenced more and more by the world. It is then that one cannot see as clearly the simple truth of the gospel as he could have when he was younger. "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all,*" Jesus said. "And He took them in His arms and *began* blessing them, laying His hands on them" (Mark 10:15-16). The church should do the same.

Attitude toward unbelievers in the church:

What should be the attitude of believers toward unbelievers who attend their church services? Should they desire unbelievers to attend, or should they not want them to come because of the negative influence they might have upon the church and lives of the believers? Some might argue that the church should open its arms to unbelievers for the purpose of reaching them for Christ. Others might disagree, fearing that unbelievers could bring worldly practices and attitudes into the church, disrupting things and leading believers astray. They might especially fear today's youth culture with their godless music, colored hair, body piercings, sensual clothing, and drug and alcohol use. What then is a biblical view regarding this issue?

Those who are concerned about the negative effect that unbelievers can have in a church have legitimate concerns. No pastor or elder wants to see members of his flock led astray. Jesus Himself addressed this issue in a more general context in Luke 17:1, when He plainly stated a hard truth: “He said to His disciples, ‘It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come!’” When unbelievers come into the church, there may at times be casualties. The pastor needs to keep in mind that the members of his church will interact with unbelievers in the world on a regular basis. It is when they are alone that they will probably have a greater chance of being negatively influenced rather than when they are in the church building surrounded by their brothers and sisters in Christ. Knowing that this can happen, some church leaders may even go so far as to warn their flock not to associate with unbelievers outside of the church building so they do not become tainted by the world. Though this warning is an attempt to keep the

people he is responsible for safe (cf. Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17), this is an unbiblical viewpoint. It is true that believers are not to be tainted by the world (Jam. 4:4), but it is not true that they should not interact with the people of the world. Paul made this clear in 1 Corinthians 5 when he stated: "I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler — not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within *the church?*" (vss. 9-12). So on the contrary, believers are to associate with unbelievers. But what if an unbeliever were to lead a believer astray? Jesus spoke about this as well in the verses following Luke 17:1, which was referenced previously. Jesus said: "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble. Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him'" (vss. 2-4). In this passage, Jesus teaches that the unbeliever will be judged by God for his wickedness. Jesus also states that the believer needs to be on guard for his brother, to rebuke him when he sins; and if he repents, to forgive him. It is true that stumbling blocks will come, even within the church. The church members therefore need to be watchful, guarding one another to help prevent them from being led astray and falling into sin.

There are many other lessons which can be gleaned from the Scriptures which indicate that we are to have involvement with the people of the world, not pushing them away because they are not Christians. One of them comes from the life of Jesus Himself. Jesus, during His time on earth, was known as the friend of tax gatherers and sinners (Mat. 9:10-11; 11:19; Luke 15:1); and because of this He was called a glutton (Gk.: phagos, a person who habitually eats) and a drunkard (Gk.: oinopotes, a person who habitually drinks) (Mat. 11:19; Luke 7:34). It was because of Jesus' concern for the lost, the poor, the lame, the blind, etc. (Luke 4:18; 7:22), that He spent so much time with them. Who were those who questioned Jesus' association with these people? It was the scribes and Pharisees (Mat. 9:10-11; Luke 15:1-2), the religious leaders of that time. They were the ones who condemned Jesus for reaching out to the lost. How did Jesus respond to their criticism? The gospel of Mark records the following: "As He passed by, He saw Levi the *son* of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, 'Follow Me!' And he got up and followed Him. And it happened that He was reclining *at the table* in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, 'Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?' And hearing *this*, Jesus said to them, '*It is* not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners'" (Mark 2:14-17). Because this was the concern of Jesus, this should also be the concern of the church and its members as well. What if as a result of such ministry the people of the church are called gluttons and drunkards like Jesus? Then so be it! For Jesus told His disciples: "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this

the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me" (John 15:18-21). Also keep in mind the words of the Apostle Paul to the Philippians: "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me" (Php. 1:29-30). Sadly to say, this persecution may very well come from the "scribes and Pharisees" within your own church, affiliated churches and/or church organizations (cf. Acts 20:29-30).

Some other lessons or principles which can be learned from the New Testament in regards to this issue are: 1) Jesus gave Himself for the lost (Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:24); 2) it is the responsibility of believers to preach the gospel to the lost (Rom. 10:12-15; 1 Cor. 1:17; 2 Cor. 5:18-21); 3) believers are to love the lost, including their enemies (Mat. 5:43-48); 4) believers are to do good to all men, even unbelievers (Gal. 6:10); 5) believers are to make the most of their time here on earth (Eph. 5:15-16); and 6) believers are to make the most of every opportunity to reach the lost for Christ (Col. 4:5). Though Christians are not to act like unbelievers (Eph. 4:17-19), believers should expect unbelievers to act like unbelievers. It is not the church's job to judge them (1 Cor. 5:9-12). It is however the responsibility of the church and each believer to take the Word of God to them (2 Cor. 5:20-21) for it changes hearts (Heb. 4:12). As believers are obedient in doing this, the Holy Spirit will convict the hearts of unbelievers of their sin, Christ's righteousness and coming judgment. That is His responsibility (John 16:8-11).

Should the church open its doors to the lost? Absolutely! They should be invited into the church so that the church can be salt and light to them (Mat. 5:13-16), reaching them with the gospel of Christ. This however does not mean that unbelievers are to be asked to or should be involved in the ministries of the church in any way, or even to give financially to the church; for the church is not to be bound together with unbelievers in the work of God (2 Cor. 6:14-15). By inviting them to the services and events of the church to hear the Word of God preached (cf. 1 Cor. 14:24-25) and to see Christ lived out in the lives of believers (cf. John 13:35; Gal. 5:22-23), this offers a great opportunity to present Christ to them.

See the article in the appendix titled, "Mobilizing Members for Evangelism," which gives further information about the elements of evangelism.

Church Planting:

When believers of a church reach out to the lost world around them, this results in a growing church. As the church grows and becomes stronger and larger, church leaders need to analyze their church, considering when and where they will begin planting a new church.

In some countries the megachurch movement (churches with thousands of members) is flourishing. The question is: "Are megachurches a good model for the local church?" Should it be the goal of a church to become as large as it can? Can such a multitude of people and their resources be used more effectively in a number

of smaller churches spread throughout a region to reach that area for Christ? This of course is debated; but in the author's opinion, smaller churches spread out over a region are far better, being more personal, more accessible, and more practical. This then would emphasize the need for church planting to be a part of the local church's ministry. This is the New Testament model.

When Jesus gave His disciples what is traditionally called "The Great Commission," He told them: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mat. 28:18-20). As one reads the book of Acts, he sees this commission carried out. As people went, they made disciples; and as a result, new churches were started (cf. Acts 8:4-8,14-16,25,26-40; 9:32-35; 11:19-26; 13-19). Therefore it should be the natural tendency of a church to reproduce itself and start new churches. This should be a stated goal of a church from its conception. As the church grows, this objective as well as the other objectives of the church, need to be affirmed on a regular basis before its members in order to keep the church united in its purpose (cf. Php. 2:1-2). It would then be the responsibility of the elders to consider when and where it would be feasible and practical to start another church.

One issue which church leaders need to consider in such an endeavor is its resources. Is there a sufficient number of people and money available to start a new church without significantly impairing the current ministry of the mother church? This is important to contemplate because a church plant will take away a considerable amount of resources from the mother church. This will happen when both money and equipped, gifted people from the mother church are allocated to the church plant. When this takes place, the mother church must have people ready and qualified to fulfill the responsibilities of those who leave to help the new church. Therefore, the mother church needs to be willing and able to give up some of its resources so that the church plant can be equipped to succeed.

Though the above-mentioned issues need to be taken into account, the mother church needs to count the cost, plan, prepare, and then step out by faith. On the one hand, there may never be an opportune time to start a new church, for there will always be obstacles. On the other hand, when God is involved and the church has made the necessary preparations, great things can happen. The church which does not have a biblical vision will never even consider such a venture. But, the church that understands the Great Commission will be praying for, thinking about, and looking for an opportune time to start a new church. Such vision is necessary and needs to originate from the church leaders.

Cross-cultural missions:

Another aspect of church outreach is the sending out of cross-cultural missionaries and supporting world missions. Jesus told His disciples just before ascending into heaven, "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Evangelization and church planting done by believers will fulfill the first part of this commission, being witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea. But being the witness of Christ in Samaria

and to the remotest part of the earth falls under the category of cross-cultural world missions. Samaria, though located just north of Judea, was then considered another country and culture. Therefore from this verse, the responsibility of the local church to be involved in this endeavor is evident.

Sending out cross-cultural missionaries:

Acts 13 records the commissioning and sending out of the first cross-cultural missionaries by a church. When the church was scattered earlier due to persecution as Acts 8 records, the gospel also spread to other cultures (Acts 8:1-5). Many of these believers therefore went about from place to place as missionaries in various cross-cultural settings. What makes Acts 13 different is the fact that this is the first record where the Holy Spirit specifically tells an established church to set aside someone for the explicit work of cross-cultural missions. This was new at this point in the church's history. Luke records: "Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (vss. 1-3).

The Holy Spirit told the church leaders, while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, to set aside for Himself Barnabas and Saul for this work. The church then commissioned them with fasting and the laying on of hands and prayer. They then sent them out on the first of Paul's three recorded missionary journeys. From there Paul and Barnabas went from place to place preaching the gospel (cf. Acts 13:4-5,14ff; 14:1). As a result of their efforts, churches were started in different cultures, and elders were appointed in each church to lead them (Acts 14:21-23). After their journey ended, they returned to their church in Antioch and reported all that God had done (Acts 14:26-28). This is the missionary's task and life in brief (see the article in the appendix titled, "The Missionary Process," for more information).

It is interesting to see how the first missionaries were chosen. The Holy Spirit selected them and told the church leaders at Antioch to set them apart. It is also interesting to note that the men whom the Holy Spirit had set apart were the best this church had to offer -- men who were mature, trained and experienced in the ministry and in the things of God (Acts 4:36-37; 9:18-30; 11:19-30; 12:24-25; Php. 3:1-6). They were not new believers nor inexperienced. They were tested and had been found worthy. They were the kind of men who most churches would not want to lose. Yet these were the very men whom God had prepared for this work. Therefore a church should not selfishly hold on to such people whom God has called, but should with gladness send them forth into the harvest fields (cf. Luke 10:2).

In contrast to Paul and Barnabas is John Mark, whom Paul and Barnabas took with them on a trip to Jerusalem (Acts 12:25), and then later on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). It was on the second trip that John Mark deserted them (Acts 13:13). Though the underlying reason for his desertion is not recorded, the result was that he did not go on to fulfill the work he had committed to do (Acts 15:38). His turning back was enough to later cause serious problems within his

missionary team, for on a future journey Paul did not even want to take him along because of his previous performance (Acts 15:37-38). Barnabas, John Mark's cousin (Col. 4:10), ended up taking John Mark with him when Paul and Barnabas parted ways over this (Acts 15:39-40).

It can be noted that John Mark had been faithful on his first trip to Jerusalem, and that men such as Paul and Barnabas chose him to work alongside of them on their second trip. Yet even after all that, John Mark was still unfaithful to his task. He fell short of the goal. This can happen to anyone on the mission field. There will be disappointments. Missionaries may let their churches and missionary teams down at times. This is the reason why it is important that people who desire to go to the mission field, but lack ministry experience and a high level of maturity, be placed on teams where they can gain what they lack from more experienced missionaries, just as John Mark and Timothy did (Acts 16:1-3; 17:14-15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; 1 Tim. 1:2; 4:12). It is important to note that later on John Mark did prove himself worthy (Mark; Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:13), but this was probably due to the result of gaining some needed maturity and experience (cf. Acts 15:39). Therefore, churches need to do their best to ensure that those whom they send are prepared because the mission field is a difficult place to serve the Lord.

When should a church send out cross-cultural missionaries?

When should a church become involved in missions? Should it wait until it has reached its Jerusalem and Judea first? Or should it work at reaching its Jerusalem and Judea while simultaneously trying to reach Samaria and the remotest parts of the earth? Acts 1:8 says, "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, **and** in all Judea **and** Samaria, **and** even to the remotest part of the earth" (emphasis added). The word "and" indicates that the process of being witnesses to these four areas is not sequential; after having completely reached Jerusalem one then moves on to reach Judea, and so on. The idea presented here is the same as that given in Matthew 28:19. There Jesus said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations;" the emphasis being on the making of the disciples (the imperative), not on the going. Therefore, as one goes -- or in other words, wherever one finds himself -- he is to make disciples. If a person is in his Jerusalem, there he is to make disciples. If he is in his Judea, then there he is to make disciples, and so on. A church needs to have the same view. Wherever its members are located at any point in time or wherever they are sent by the church, such as to another culture, there they are to make disciples. One other thought to consider is that when Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the church in Antioch, one can be assured that the church in Antioch had not yet reached everyone in their Jerusalem and Judea. This is an ongoing, endless process. This is why a church needs to see the big picture and simultaneously have workers laboring in their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the remotest part of the world.

Because of the church's commission to reach surrounding nations and the remotest part of the earth, it is the responsibility of the local church to look for ways in which it can be involved in this endeavor. This can be done by sending out cross-cultural missionaries from their church, by financially supporting cross-cultural missionaries from other churches, and/or by financially supporting cross-cultural mission organizations. This is the church's commission -- to give of its people and

financial resources for the sake of the gospel (cf. Php. 4:15-16). This is an endeavor which the church is privileged to be a part of. Churches need to make sure that they are not only looking inward for the purpose of fulfilling their own needs, but are also looking outward to meet the needs of others. Those churches which have an understanding of their responsibility and work at carrying out this commission the best they can, will be blessed by having all of their needs met in Christ (cf. Php. 4:14-19). Therefore, such churches which are involved in proclaiming the gospel are blessed to be fellow partakers of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 9:23).

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

Mobilizing church membership:

1. Does your church offer its members periodic training in how to reach the lost for Christ? If so, when was the last time that your church offered this training? When is the next time that it will be offered?

2. As a result of your church's evangelism training, do your members have a method to share the gospel which is:

   - Easy to use
   - Comprehensive
   - Fruitful

3. What is the main goal of your church services and sermons? Are they for evangelism or for the edification of the believers present? If they are meant for evangelism, will this be changed? Why or why not?

4. Does your church reach out to the man of the house and not just to the wife and older children? Do you see how reaching the husband can be advantageous to the family? Does your church need to make any changes in regard to this?

5. Does your church attempt to reach young children with the gospel (ages 3 and up)? If not, will you change this? What can your church do to reach them with the gospel?

6. Does your church warmly welcome unbelievers into its services? Does it openly welcome unbelieving teenagers who may have colored hair, body piercings, who smoke, drink, etc.? If not, please defend your view with Scripture, using Mark 2:15-17 as one of your texts.

7. What are some ways in which your church reaches out to the lost on a regular basis (e.g., events, ministries, children's groups, teen groups, etc.)?

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8. Is there anyone in your church who is exceptionally gifted at sharing his faith and reaching the lost for Christ? Please write his name below. How are you using this person to train others? If you are not using him in this manner, then how can you begin to do this?

Church planting:

1. Do your church leaders have the goal of starting another church at some time in the future? If so, do your members share this conviction? If not, what can your leaders do to instill that same conviction in them?

2. If your church has the goal of starting a new church one day:

   - Has it already created a plan on how to do this?

   - How will it determine when it is the right time to begin this process?

   - How will it determine where to start the new church?

- How will it finance this venture?

- Who will lead this church plant and which families from the church will help him?

  Church plant leader: _____

  Other families/individuals:

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3. Is there another church or two which your church could work together with to start a new church? List the churches below that you could contact to discuss such a project:

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Missions:

1. Is your church involved in cross-cultural missions?

   - Has your church sent a missionary to another country?
   - Does your church support a missionary in another country?
   - Are there any other ways in which your church is involved in cross-cultural missions?

2. Do your church leaders see the need to be involved in reaching the lost in other countries? If not, please explain why they do not see this need.

3. What are some ways in which your church can become involved in world missions?

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4. Has your church ever considered sending a small team to another country for a short period of time to do missions work (i.e., two weeks, a month, two months)? Is this a possibility?

5. Is there any person or couple in your church whom you believe God has set apart to be a missionary to another country? If so, who is this individual or couple? Why do you believe that God has chosen them to do this?

6. Is it possible for your church to work together with another church to send out and/or support a missionary to another country? If so, please list some potential churches below that your church could partner with in such a project.

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7. What process will your church go through to become involved in world missions and/or to send out a missionary? Whom would you contact?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. When will you begin training new believers in evangelism? Remember, they are the most evangelistic shortly after salvation.

2. At what point in the development of your church should you begin presenting the idea of planting another church and of sending out missionaries?

3. Follow-up and discipleship of new believers are two very important aspects after salvation, yet at times they are neglected. Why are they so important to the new believer and your church?

4. What things can your church do to promote evangelism, church planting and missions?

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MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH:

Discipleship

Importance of discipleship:

As a result of a church's efforts in evangelism, unbelievers become believers. In that split second process of a person's conversion, the unbeliever is regenerated by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5) and becomes a child of God (John 1:12; 1 John 3:10). This is how disciples are made (cf. Acts 6:7; 14:21). As a result of a person's conversion, the new believer is to be baptized and then the process of discipleship is to begin (Mat. 28:19-20; cf. Acts 2:40-42; 2 Tim. 2:2). This is in accordance with Matthew 28:19-20, where Jesus stated that after new believers are baptized they are to be taught to observe all that Christ commanded.

The discipleship process is lengthy and ongoing, and may take many forms. Some possibilities might include: classes which teach the doctrine of the church and its practices, evangelism and discipleship, the spiritual disciplines (see the article titled, "Spiritual Disciplines"), books of the Bible or related topics (e.g., family issues, holy living, how to preach and/or teach, how to determine God's will, etc.). Teaching on such topics, along with practical training by people who are involved in ministry, will help strengthen a church and its members in the things of the Lord. This kind of training can also be used to prepare church members for ministries inside and outside of the church. Without this kind of discipleship, the average person will not likely become grounded in the faith and may be weak and unproductive. These are the types of believers who will more than likely be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, possibly even leaving the church after being enticed by the world (cf. Mat. 13:22; 1 Tim. 6:17; Jam. 4:4) or by a false religious group (cf. Gal. 4:9; Col. 2:8). If they do stay within the church, they will probably become dull of hearing, still needing to be taught the elementary principles of the faith, not maturing in righteousness, and therefore not knowing the difference between good and evil (Heb. 5:11-14). They will be like children whose parents never trained them how to live and function in the world because they had not been built up in their faith (cf. Eph. 4:11-16).

Building up believers in their faith is the main job of the pastor-teacher and evangelist (see the article titled, "Pastor's and Evangelist's Equipping Ministry ").

This is important for them to walk in Christ and to one day be presented before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach, firmly rooted, and continually built up in Christ, established and steadfast in their faith (Col. 1:21-23; 2:6-7). So that believers are not carried away by error and discontinue being steadfast in the faith, they need to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:17-18). Therefore as a result of the discipleship process, believers will be "...built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:4-5).

Biblical examples of disciplers:

In the Scriptures there are examples of men who discipled others. An early example is Moses who discipled Joshua from the time that he was a young boy (cf. Exo. 24:13; Num. 11:28). In this discipleship process, Joshua was almost always at Moses' side. Joshua was even on Mt. Sinai for the forty days and forty nights that Moses was there in the presence of God (Exo. 24:13-18; 32:15-18). As Moses discipled Joshua, he entrusted him with important responsibilities (cf. Exo. 17:9-14; 33:11; Num. 13:16) through which Joshua learned and also proved himself. Moses could do this because Joshua became a trusted disciple. Moses also did this because Joshua was being prepared to be Israel's future leader (cf. Josh. 1:1; 3:7). As a result of Moses' investment in him, Joshua was commissioned (Num. 27:18-23; Deut. 31:14), charged (Deut. 31:7), and then assumed the place of Moses as the next leader of Israel (Josh. 1:1-11; 3:7).

Another Person who made disciples by investing His life in theirs was Jesus. Jesus, after prayer (Luke 6:12-13), chose twelve men whom He would prepare to be His Apostles (Luke 6:13-16). To do this, Jesus had these men travel and live with Him (Luke 8:1), eat and sleep with Him (cf. Mat. 9:10; 26:20-21; Mark 6:31). Therefore they were able to observe Him in many and varied situations. In this way, He prepared them for their future work by teaching them (John 4:27-38; Mat. 5:1-2; Luke 8:1-3; 22-56; 9:12-17; Mark 4:1-25), entrusting them with responsibilities (Mat. 10:1-5; 11:1; Mark 3:14; Luke 9:1-10), giving them special insight into His teachings (Mark 10:32-34; Luke 8:10), and allowing them to witness His miracles (Mark 4:39; 6:1-2). From these twelve, Jesus chose three of them in whom He invested even more of His time and energy -- Peter, James, and John. Not only did these three have special privileges (Luke 8:49-56; Mat. 17:1-13), they were also the ones chosen to be near Him when He was praying in the garden the night He was arrested (Mark 14:33-42). Though Judas betrayed Him (Luke 22:48), church history records that the other eleven disciples remained faithful until death, and that all but possibly John died a martyr's death for the sake of Christ.

Another disciple maker was the Apostle Paul. One of Paul's disciples was Timothy. Timothy accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys during which time Paul trained him as they spent considerable time together (Acts 16:1-5; 20:4; Rom. 16:21; 2 Cor. 1:1,19; Php. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1; Phil. 1; 1 & 2 Timothy). The epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy are two of Paul's training manuals for his young disciple (1 Tim. 4:12). Paul also assigned Timothy special responsibilities to carry out (Acts 17:13-15; 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17; Php. 2:19); and even though Timothy was a young man, Paul's training prepared him for when he would be the pastor of the church in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3).

Characteristics of the discipleship process:

Collectively, the characteristics of the discipleship process which can be observed from the lives of Moses, Jesus and Paul are:

1. The disciples were chosen as a result of prayer and/or God's direction
2. The disciples spent much time with their mentor
3. The disciples were taught (through the Word of God and experience)
4. The disciples ministered with and under the guidance of their mentor
5. The disciples were entrusted with responsibilities
6. The disciples were prepared for future ministry
7. The disciples were sent out on their own (when the discipleship process was completed)

As with these three disciple makers, it is the leader's responsibility to invest himself in the lives of his disciples. The leader's training is to not only be in the classroom, but also outside in the realm of real life. The one being discipled needs to see his mentor living out and being an example of how to do those things which he is being taught. The mentor becomes a living, breathing example his disciples can hear, see, observe, and touch (cf. 1 John 1:1), and not simply a conveyer of knowledge. A discipleship process which lacks this element may turn out unprepared, ill-equipped disciples. Therefore time is crucial to this process as one person invests his time and life in that of another. As "iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Pro. 27:17).

Discipling others is an important aspect of a leader's responsibilities. As Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." The leader is to take the things which he has learned and teach them to faithful men who are under his charge. These disciples are to be men who in turn are capable of taking what they have learned and teaching other faithful men. This is to be an ongoing process.

Results of the discipleship process:

The results of the discipleship process are beneficial to the disciple, his church, others outside of his church, and his mentor. This is true because a believer who is or has been discipled generally is a growing Christian who will manifest his faith wherever he goes. His life will be a blessing to those with whom he has contact. He will also be a good example to others. His presence in his church should have a stabilizing effect. He, and others like him, will help keep things in the church running smoothly and progressing as they serve. Since this disciple should not be a person who is tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, he will help keep the church on track doctrinally and during difficult times. In contrast to this, if discipleship does not take place, over time the church will most likely begin to die. Also as church leaders change, so will the church and possibly its doctrine, as well as other aspects of its ministry since no solid leadership has been raised up to maintain the church's stability. Therefore, any church which does not have a discipleship program is being irresponsible and will over time experience the negative effects of its negligence.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Besides the teaching which a person receives in your weekly services, what specific training does your church provide to disciple new believers?

2. What specific discipleship training does your church provide to disciple more mature believers?

3. Does your church have a portrait of what it desires a new believer to look and act like when he or she becomes a mature believer? Below write a word picture of what that person would be like? Also, how long should it take for this process to be completed?

4. Does your church have a plan in place which it follows to take a new believer from his or her spiritual infancy to maturity?

5. If your church does not have such a plan in place, please write out a basic plan with a timeline of training that you feel should take place in such a process. Please include biblical as well as practical objectives that you would like to see occur.

   - First year:

   - Second year:

   - Third year:

- Fourth year:

- Fifth year:

6. What are some ministry opportunities which your pastor or elders can involve people in for the purpose of giving them practical ministry experience?

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7. List below those people you would like to see involved in these ministry training opportunities.

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NOTE: There are very good discipleship programs available which can be purchased. Your church should consider materials such as Navigators 2:7 (Colossians 2:7) or other Navigator material.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. Do you know what material you will use to disciple new believers? Will you purchase it or will you develop it yourself? If you are going to purchase it, have you decided on what to purchase or have you already purchased it? If you will develop your own materials, have you written them or are you in the process of doing so?

2. List the topics below which you believe you will need to teach a new believer to develop him into a mature, well-rounded disciple of Christ?

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3. Though it is natural for people you disciple to learn from your example and even imitate aspects of your character and practices, what will you do to ensure that you produce disciples of Jesus and not disciples of yourself? What indicators would you look for to determine whether the person is more of a disciple of Jesus than yourself?

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MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH:

Member Care

Necessity of member care:

Caring for the members of a church is a normal and necessary part of its function. This is seen by the fact that God so composed the body in such a way that there would be no division within the body in that the members would care for one another (1 Cor. 12:24-25). "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:26; Rom. 12:15). The body of Christ is an intricate organism which is diversified yet unified (1 Cor. 12:12,14,20) and well-equipped to care for itself. This is what God expects.

The reality and purpose of member care is seen in the New Testament by the forty "one another" statements which address how Christians are to treat each other. The number of these statements alone demonstrates that we as believers have a responsibility to one another. As believers fulfill these commands, they will be ministering to each other in a manner that builds up and strengthens one another (cf. Pro. 27:17), and ultimately the body of Christ (Eph. 4:16).

The principle which undergirds member care:

The underlying foundation of member care is love. Love is what believers are to manifest in all they do (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-8). Jesus Himself stated: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). In this passage, Jesus commands believers to love one another as He has loved them. This is not an option. It is the way believers are to express themselves in the body of Christ. As believers express their love to one another in this way, they will give evidence to a watching world that they are truly disciples of Christ. Therefore, this ministry of love and care has the potential of being used by God to draw the lost to Himself. This can happen when they see believers love in this manner. They will observe a love that they do not normally see in this world. This will very likely cause them to be drawn to its source -- Jesus.

Elements of member care (by church leaders):

Member care has two elements associated with it. The first element is the care of the church members by church leaders (elders).[10] The second element is church members caring for one another. Both are important.

When considering the responsibility of church leaders for church members, Ezekiel 34 presents an insightful contrast between good and bad care of the flock of God. Please keep in mind that the context of this passage is the nation of Israel and their leaders, not the church. Yet, the supracultural principle of this passage -- caring for those under a leader's care -- is applicable for the leaders of their church today.

In the first portion of this passage (vss. 1-10), God reprimands the leaders of Israel (shepherds of Israel) through the prophet Ezekiel (vs. 1). He begins by declaring that they have become rich in their positions as shepherds by taking advantage of the sheep (vss. 2-3). God points out this abuse graphically when He says in verse 3: "You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat *sheep* without feeding the flock." These men were out for their own profit and well-being at the expense of the people of Israel.

God then continues in His rebuke by stating that the shepherds of Israel were not concerned about the welfare of the sheep: "Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them" (vs. 4). The leaders of Israel were appointed by God to be the protectors and shepherds of the flock, but instead they were indifferent to the needs of the people who were placed under their care. The aftermath of their disregard for the flock resulted in that the people of Israel "...were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field" (vs. 5). God then goes on to say, "My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek *for them"* (vs. 6). What a bleak picture resulted from these uncaring shepherds. They prospered while the sheep suffered. As a result of this tragedy, God said He was against them and would remove them from their positions as shepherds (vss. 7-10).

When considering this passage, one has to wonder if Peter was thinking about these exhortations in Ezekiel as he penned 1 Peter 5:2-4. There he said, "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of* God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." In these verses, Peter addresses the underlying issues of which the shepherds in Ezekiel 34 were guilty. Yet in Peter's case, he reminds his

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[10] The term "church leaders" in this manual is synonymous with the word "elders." Elders are those who meet the scriptural qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, and are recognized by the church as such; this includes a church's pastor-teacher and/or evangelist. For further discussion, see the articles titled, "Church Leadership Roles Defined" and "Pastor's and Evangelist's Equipping Ministry."

readers that the Chief Shepherd will come, bringing with Him the reward which the faithful will receive. This sharply contrasts with the shepherds of Ezekiel 34 whom God would also visit, but for the purpose of removing them from their positions; not to reward them.

These issues are an important reminder to elders. One day they will stand before Christ to give an account for the souls of those whom were allotted to their charge (Heb. 13:17). If they are obedient to the exhortations of Peter, then they will be rewarded. If they are not faithful, then they will still be saved, but no rewards will be given to them (1 Cor. 3:10-15). Therefore, it is important that they be faithful, for Hebrews 10:31 states: "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Continuing on to the second portion of Ezekiel 34, a contrast is made between the wicked shepherds of Israel and God, the Good Shepherd. In verses 11-16, Ezekiel wrote that God responds to His sheep in the opposite way of the wicked shepherds. In contrast, God will search for and seek them out (vs. 11), care for and gather them (vss. 12-13), feed them in the best of pasture lands (vss. 13-15), give them rest (vs. 15), and take care of their physical needs and infirmities (vs. 16). This is the type of shepherd whom King David described in Psalm 23. This is also the example of the type of shepherd elders are to strive to be. Please note that not only will God care for His sheep in this way, He will also one day judge them (vss. 17-19). This too is a necessary responsibility of elders, in addition to caring for and loving the sheep (See article titled, "Church Discipline").

When considering the elder's ministry of member care, two principles need to be first and foremost. The first is that elders are to have a heart for and love the people under their care (1 Thes. 4:9; 1 Pet. 1:22). This is important because if they do not have a love for them, then their ministry will be ineffective. This may be the reason why Paul said that the elder is to aspire to this office (1 Tim. 3:1); for hopefully he who aspires to it will have a desire to serve those under his care. His desire would be in contrast to one who exercises oversight under compulsion and not voluntarily, or for sordid gain; for he should serve with eagerness (1 Pet. 5:2). If he becomes an elder for reasons other than a desire to serve God and His lambs, then he will not do it from a proper motive. It is tragic when this occurs.

The second principle is that elders should not lord it over their flock, but instead be examples for the flock to follow (1 Pet. 5:3). Those who lord it over others are not examples of Christ's love because they are not servants who exemplify the love of Christ. They are lords -- not men who manifest the fruit of the Spirit ("But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law", Gal. 5:22-23). Jesus said of those who desire to lord it over others: "...'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many'" (Mat. 20:25-28). Therefore church leaders need to heed the words of Paul in Philippians 2:3-4: "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." Such a leader will be an example to the flock as Peter spoke of in 1 Peter 5:3.

Some areas of member care which can be gleaned from the Scriptures in which elders should be investing their time are:

- Rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep (Rom. 12:15)
- Restoring those in sin (Gal. 6:1)
- Bearing the burdens of others (Gal. 6:2)
- Doing good to all people, especially to the children of God (Gal. 6:10)
- Caring for widows in need (1 Tim. 5:9-10)
- Ministering to believers in prison (Heb. 13:3)
- Ministering to believers who are ill-treated (Heb. 13:3)
- Visiting orphans and widows in their distress (Jam. 1:27)
- Meeting the physical needs of others (cf. Jam. 2:14-17; 1 John 3:17)
- Praying over the sick who call for the elders (Jam. 5:13-18)
- Turning a sinner from the error of his way (Jam. 5:19-20)
- Being sympathetic to others (1 Pet. 3:8)
- Disciplining those who have strayed (1 Cor. 5; Mat. 18:15-20)

This list is not exhaustive. There are many ways in which elders of a church can and should minister to the needs of their flock. They, like the Good Shepherd, need to care for their sheep (cf. John 10:1-15).

Elements of member care (by church members):

The second aspect of a church's member care is the responsibility that members have for one another. The Scriptures are clear that a true believer is to love the brethren (1 John 4:11). If he does not, then as the Apostle John said, such a person does not know God (1 John 4:8) and cannot love God (1 John 4:20). In a believer's love for the brethren, John goes so far as to say that he must be willing not only to provide for them material things when they are in need (food, clothing, etc.; 1 John 3:17; cf. Jam. 2:14-17), but even be willing to lay down his life for them (1 John 3:16). This is the ultimate form of love and sacrifice for one another (John 15:13). Christians are not to "love with word or with tongue" only, "but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18).

How then should the body of Christ minister to one another? As was stated previously, there are forty "one another" statements which are the responsibility of all believers. As one considers these statements, along with those commands listed previously, he can gain a good understanding of his responsibility in caring for his fellow members in the body of Christ. Below is a list of selected “one another” statements which help define areas of member care:

- "...admonish one another" (Rom. 15:14)
- "...through love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13)
- "Bear one another's burdens..." (Gal. 6:2)
- "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love" (Eph. 4:2)
- "...we are members of one another" (Eph. 4:25)

- "And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." (Eph. 4:32)
- "...regard one another as more important than himself" (Php. 2:3)
- "Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing" (1 Thes. 5:11)
- "See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men" (1 Thes. 5:15)
- "But encourage one another day after day..." (Heb. 3:13)
- "and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24-25)
- "Do not speak against one another..." (Jam. 4:11)
- "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another..." (Jam. 5:16)
- "...fervently love one another from the heart" (1 Pet. 1:22)
- "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8)
- "Be hospitable to one another without complaint" (1 Pet. 4:9)
- "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet. 4:10)

As mentioned earlier, when church members care for one another in this way, the body will grow, be strengthened and be a shining light to the unsaved world. Another advantage will be realized by the pastor and elders -- their workload will be diminished. This will occur because the body will be functioning as it should. Not all of the member care responsibility, which can be very time consuming as well as emotionally and physically draining, will then fall upon the church leaders; responsibility will be distributed to all members of the church. For pastors and church leaders who want to control everything and everyone, this is not a welcome thought. But for the pastor and leaders who want to mobilize and enable the body of Christ (who have been allotted to their charge to do the work of Christ), this is a very freeing and encouraging mandate. Encourage member care within your church, for a body which does not care for itself is not a unified, healthy body. It is sick and needs help because it is not functioning properly.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. As a church leader, how would you assess your guardianship and thoroughness in caring for the sheep? Are you pleased with your past performance when compared to the biblical standards presented here, or do you need to improve? If you need to improve, what changes need to be made?

2. Are you and your church leaders doing a good job caring for your members? If not, how could you work together to be better shepherds?

3. Have the members of your church been taught how to minister to one another in times of crises? If not and you were to preach four messages on this topic, what passages would you choose to preach on, and what would you want your church members to know about this topic?

   - Message one:
   - Message two:
   - Message three:
   - Message four:

4. Does your church have a plan prepared for how it will respond to a member in need?

5. Does your church have a plan prepared for how it will respond to a non-church member from your community who is in need?

6. If your church has not prepared a plan for how to care for a member who is in need, then please list the steps which you feel would be necessary in such a situation.

   - Step one:
   - Step two:
   - Step three:
   - Step four:
   - Step five:

- Step six:

7. If a non-church member of your community is in a crisis, what things can your church do to reach out to this person in their time of need?

   - Step one:
   - Step two:
   - Step three:
   - Step four:
   - Step five:
   - Step six:

8. From the list below, are there any areas where your church leaders need to invest more time? Check those areas which need more attention by your leaders.

   - ☐ Rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep -- Rom. 12:15
   - ☐ Restoring those in sin (Gal. 6:1)
   - ☐ Bearing the burdens of others (Gal. 6:2)
   - ☐ Doing good to all people, especially to the children of God (Gal. 6:10)
   - ☐ Caring for widows in need (1 Tim. 5:9-10)
   - ☐ Ministering to believers in prison (Heb. 13:3)
   - ☐ Ministering to believers who are ill-treated (Heb. 13:3)
   - ☐ Visiting orphans and widows in their distress (Jam. 1:27)
   - ☐ Meeting the physical needs of others (cf. Jam. 2:14-17; 1 John 3:17)
   - ☐ Praying over the sick who call for the elders (Jam. 5:13-18)
   - ☐ Turning a sinner from the error of his way (Jam. 5:19-20)
   - ☐ Being sympathetic to others (1 Pet. 3:8)
   - ☐ Disciplining those who have strayed (1 Cor. 5; Mat. 18:15-20)

9. What should be the foundational characteristics of a member care ministry?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. What can you do to integrate the one another statements into the lives of the people of your church from its conception so that they are statements which people live out and not simply know about?

2. Member care is vital to any church, but why is it especially vital to a church that is just beginning?

3. Due to a difference in personalities, some pastors naturally focus more of their attention on their teaching ministry and duties of administration than on their responsibilities of member care. If this describes you, what can you do to make sure that the member care needs of your church are being met?

4. It is important to develop a policy which states how a church will respond to certain areas of member care. What areas do you think such a policy should cover? Why is this important? List the areas below.

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   Have you written such a policy? If not, when do you plan to do so?

MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH:

Church Discipline

The reasons church discipline is necessary:

The church is a family (Eph. 2:19), and as such there are times when discipline needs to occur. Discipline in itself is not a bad thing. In reality, it is an act of love, for even God disciplines His children for their own good because He loves them (Heb. 12:4-11). His discipline is a form of training by which His children "may share His holiness" and yields "the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:10-11). Therefore if God disciplines those whom He loves for their good, the church is to do the same.

There are various reasons why the church may need to discipline believers. Regarding the believer himself, the purpose is twofold: 1) to shame him (2 Thes. 3:14-15); and 2) to restore him (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1; Jam. 5:19-20). When a person falls into sin and does not repent, he is to be put out of the church (1 Cor. 5:9,11,13) which will result in him being shamed. The ultimate goal of doing this is to bring him to the point of repentance and restoration. It is important to remember though, that when a believer is put out of the church, it is not to treat him like an enemy (2 Thes. 3:15). He is to be treated like an unbeliever (1 Cor. 5:13), yet be admonished like a brother (2 Thes. 3:15).

There are six additional reasons why church discipline is necessary. These reasons are actually more important than the restoration of the erring believer. If church discipline does not take place when it should, much more is at stake than just the believer turning from his sin. The first and ultimate purpose for carrying out church discipline is for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31; cf. Titus 2:6-8; Eph. 4:30). All that we do is to glorify Him, and this includes dealing with sin in the body of Christ. So if there is sin in the body which is not properly disciplined, it will not be glorifying God. As a result, the Holy Spirit will be grieved (Eph. 4:30), and the opponents of the gospel will be able to speak unfavorably about God's children for the sin within the body of Christ (cf. Titus 2:6-8). Only the removal of the sin from the body will bring glory to God.

The next reason for church discipline is the protection of its church members (Acts 20:28-30; 1 Pet. 5:2). Church leaders are required by God to protect their flock from harm. They are to deal strongly and appropriately with people in the church -- believers and unbelievers -- who are harming them (cf. Acts 20:28-30; 2 Pet. 2:1). Therefore, a so-called brother (cf. 1 Cor. 5:11) who is in sin and will not repent may not actually be a believer at all. He may be an unbeliever who is trying to destroy the church, posing as a servant of righteousness when in actuality he is a servant of the devil (2 Cor. 11:13-15; cf. 1 Cor. 3:16-17). Such a one is crafty and needs to be dealt with quickly and with wisdom (cf. 1 Cor. 5:11,13).

Purification is another reason for church discipline (1 Cor. 5:7; 1 John 2:18-19; cf. Acts 5:1-11). The issue of purification is closely related to protection, but it has a slightly different nuance. Whereas protection is safeguarding the members of the church from harm, purification is cleansing the church from sin, which like leaven can grow. Sin which is not confronted can be a catalyst for other believers to use for justification to engage in the same sin because it has been allowed to continue within the church (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1-2). This can happen when an erring believer is not disciplined and allowed to live in his sin because there are no ramifications (cf. 1 Tim. 5:20). King Solomon agreed with this conclusion when he said: “Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil“ (Eccl. 8:11). But when others in the church see straying believers disciplined by the church, this will cause them to reconsider their actions. They will realize that God desires them to live holy lives and that unrepentant sin is considered a serious matter by the church. Thus the leaven will be prevented from spreading throughout the body (1 Cor. 5:7). Yet sin which is allowed will spread within the church (1 Cor. 5:6) and have devastating affects. This is why the person who claims to be a Christian and will not repent from his sin (1 Cor. 5:11) is to be placed outside the church (1 Cor. 5:13). He is not to be allowed to attend the services of the church and is to be treated as an unbeliever (Mat. 18:17). Because he is a brother, or so-called brother, believers are not to have any fellowship with him (1 Cor. 5:11). Please note that these instructions are only for believers and not for unbelievers (1 Cor. 5:9-10,12).

Unity in the local church is also why church discipline is to be practiced (Titus 3:10-11). Believers are to be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). It is love that brings unity to the body (Col. 3:14). Therefore, a factious man who is not acting out of love but is causing disunity within the church, is to be warned swiftly to stop. He is to be given just two warnings; and if he does not abide, he is to be put out of the church because he is perverted and sinning. He has condemned himself.

The testimony of the local church and of its individual members in the community is yet another reason why sin is not to be allowed to be practiced in the church (1 Pet. 2:12). It is important that believers exemplify excellent behavior in the world. When such behavior is manifested, even though unbelievers may slander them unjustly, they will only be able to give God the glory for their good works at Christ's return (cf. Php. 2:9-11; Titus 2:6-8). Yet if believers are manifesting the deeds of the flesh (cf. Gal 5:17-21), one day they will in shame have to answer to their Savior (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 John 2:28). Therefore, discipline when exercised in the local church, will improve the reputation of the church.

The final reason for carrying out church discipline is to be obedient to the Word of God (Jam. 4:17; cf. John 13:17). Church discipline is commanded in the Scriptures; and if an individual or a church does not carry it out when necessary, they are sinning because they are not doing what is right. Such negligence will negatively impact that local church and possibly even the community in which it is located. Therefore, church leaders need to be obedient and exercise church discipline when necessary, no matter who the brother is who is involved in sin (cf. Jam. 2:1) and no matter how difficult the process may be.

When should the process of church discipline be implemented?

Church discipline is a process which is intended for the glory of God, for the health of the church, and for the restoration of the individual in sin. The question then is: "What sins and/or in what situations should the process of church discipline be initiated? The following principles will help in giving guidance in this matter:

1. The person's sin has the potential of negatively influencing the church if it is not addressed (1 Cor. 5:6-7)
2. The person's sin is habitual and considered a deed of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21); wicked behavior (cf. 1 Cor. 5:13) which is completely unacceptable for believers (1 Cor. 5:11)
3. The person's sin is causing division in the body of Christ (Titus 3:10-11; cf. Gal. 5:20)
4. The person is leading an undisciplined life (2 Thes. 3:6-14; cf. 1 Tim. 5:8)

When a person is involved in sin, individuals or church leaders can evaluate the sin in light of these four principles. If the sin meets one or more of the criteria, then the church discipline process should be initiated. If it does not meet one or more of the criteria, then maybe this person simply needs someone to come alongside of him, and gently in love speak with him about the higher standard of living in accordance with the Word of God (Gal. 6:1-2; Jam. 5:19-20). In either case, the person who is attempting to correct the individual in sin should do so, not in hostility, but in humility, remembering his own frailty (cf. Rom. 6:19; 7:14-21; 1 Cor. 10:12). A person struggling in sin may be helped through counseling or discipleship as well.

Church discipline is to be initiated when any "so-called" brother is involved in a sin which needs correction (1 Cor. 5:11). Even if there is doubt whether a person is a true believer or not, if he claims to be a Christian and is involved in a type of sin which requires discipline, the church should discipline him. If on the other hand he does not claim to be a believer but is involved in a sin that would normally be disciplined, the church is not to discipline him. Instead, the church needs to try to reach him with the gospel so that he will be saved and turn from his sin (1 Cor. 5:9-10,12). If however his sin is one that is negatively impacting the church (e.g., leading people away from the faith, attempting to lead people into sexual sin, causing division, etc.), he needs to be confronted about it. If he is still unwilling to stop practicing it, he may need to be asked to stop attending the church. The church needs to protect itself from those who would harm it as stated earlier (Acts 20:28-30).

What should be done when a person who is practicing sin which meets the criteria above yet wants to stop practicing it, but is having difficulty doing so? Should church discipline be initiated with this person immediately? It depends upon the situation. If the person is in any way harming the church and has not evidenced an appropriate amount of effort needed to change, then he must be put out of the church until he repents. But, if his sin is not known by the church at large and is not negatively impacting the church, then the pastor can take time to work with him to help him through a process of complete repentance. Yet if through such counseling the person never does come to repentance, then eventually the church discipline process needs to occur. Therefore, please note that this process could take weeks or months, depending upon the situation. Patience needs to be a part of this process, and the steps of this process should not be rushed through, unless of course the situation calls for it. Since the restoration of the believer is the final objective, the church leaders need to be careful not to create a situation where irreparable damage is done. Church discipline is a family matter, and as a loving father disciplines his child, so must loving church leaders discipline straying sheep. Moving through this process in a hasty and unloving manner could negatively impact not only the individual spiritually, but the church as well, marring its reputation in the community. That is why this process must be characterized by love, compassion and patience. Anything less than this is irresponsible behavior on the part of the church leaders.

What is the process of church discipline?

As stated above, church discipline is always to be approached with an attitude of love and humility, with patience, looking for the restoration of the believer. Again, the person initiating this process and those who may become involved also need to remember their own frailty as sinners.

When one believer is aware of another believer involved in sin which would fall under one or more of the criteria listed above, it is his responsibility to go to that person and reprove him. This is the first step in a four-step process which Jesus spoke about to His disciples as recorded in Matthew 18. Jesus made it clear that the believer who witnesses (the reprover) a brother in sin is not to go to others and talk to them about the erring brother, but he is to speak directly to his erring brother (vs. 15). If as a result of this encounter the erring brother repents, then the process ends and no one else need know about this encounter.

If however the brother in sin does not listen to his reprover and continues in sin, the reprover is to take the process to the next step. He is to go once again to the erring brother, but this time he is to take one or two witnesses with him (vs. 16). It is of course helpful if the witnesses have observed the sin themselves, but this is not necessary. It is also beneficial if one of the witnesses is the pastor of the one in sin or one of his church elders. As witnesses, it is their role to witness this second encounter when once again the reprover attempts to convince his erring brother to repent. It is the task of the witnesses to confirm the facts to make sure that the reprover is correct in his accusations. If as a result of this encounter the erring brother repents, then the process ends and no one else needs to know about this except for those involved up to this point. If however he does not repent, then once

again this process is to be taken to a higher level where this issue is to be brought before the church (vs. 17).

This third step is the highest level of church discipline. In this step, the brother in sin is once again given the opportunity to repent, but this time before a gathering of the church members. It is here that the reprover testifies about what he has seen in the life of his erring brother, how he has approached him on two occasions, appealing to him to repent, and how both attempts have failed. It is then that the witnesses will testify about their encounter in the second step of this process and the associated facts. If as a result of this the brother in sin repents, then the process ends and the brother is restored. If he does not repent, then the discipline proceeds to the final step.

The last step in this process for the church is when the brother in sin does not repent. In such a case, the erring brother is to be put out of the church (vs. 17; cf. Eccl. 8:11). In other words, he is not to be allowed to attend its services until he repents. The Apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthians about this matter when he said: "I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people... For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within *the church?* But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES" (1 Cor. 5:9,12-13). When this step is completed, the church is to treat the so-called brother as an unbeliever ("as a Gentile and a tax collector"; Mat. 18:17), though he is to be admonished like a brother (2 Thes. 3:15). The word "remove" has the idea of expelling someone, separating them from something and driving them away, getting rid of them. For example, if someone asked you to "remove" an object from a room, you would place it outside of the room, separating it from the place where it once was so that it would no longer be a part of its previous surroundings. In the same way, a disciplined believer is to be separated from the church and not be allowed to be a part of it until he repents. As a result of this process, the erring brother will no longer be under the protection of the church, but will be open to the discipline of God (cf. Heb. 12:4-11) and the attack of Satan (cf. 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Pet. 5:8). Finally, the believers in his church are not to fellowship with him; actually, they are "not even to eat with such a one" (1 Cor. 5:9,11).

Why is he to be put out of the church and not allowed to attend its services? Because doing this will shame him (2 Thes. 3:14-15); and since he cannot return to his church family until he repents, this should cause the true believer to want to turn from his sin and be reconciled with his church family.

How is the disciplined believer to be treated "as a Gentile and a tax collector"? By treating him with love -- the way a believer would treat any other unbeliever. Yet there is not to be any kind of fellowship with him since he is being treated as an unbeliever, "...for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? (2 Cor. 6:14). Also when appropriate, the believer should try to witness to him as he would to an unbeliever.

Though some believe that the one under church discipline should be allowed to attend the services of the church so that he will be under the teaching of the Word of God and repent, this is an incorrect view as has been shown above. The Holy Spirit is able to convict him of his need to repent in order to be reconciled to his church; that is His ministry (John 16:8). Therefore as 1 Corinthians 5:9,13 teaches,

believers should have no fellowship with him, and he should be placed outside the church. However, when he does repent, he is to be allowed back into the fellowship of the church, and the church's love for him is to be affirmed so that he will not "be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow" (2 Cor. 2:5-11).

In regard to the completion of the church discipline process when the brother in sin has been put out of the church, Jesus stated in Matthew 18:18: "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." In other words, this action taken by the church is recognized as binding before God. Then when the church releases this person from church discipline and he is restored to his church family, this action also is recognized by God. Jesus then states in verses 19 and 20: "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst." Though many understand these two verses as a separate thought which is not related to the issue of church discipline, this is not correct. Jesus is continuing His instruction from the previous context. What He is saying is that when an agreement is made to place a sinning believer out of the church or accept him back into the assembly (a decision which is to be made by the church leaders), Jesus -- being in their midst in this process -- is the reason that their decision is binding. Therefore, church discipline is not a matter to be taken lightly because it is not just a decision of the church since Jesus is involved in the process as well.

What should church leaders do if in the midst of the church discipline process the erring brother resigns his membership and leaves the church? Should they pursue the believer and continue the church discipline process to the end? What the church does in such a case needs to be determined according to the situation at hand. By the very fact that the brother in sin left the church shows that he is in an unrepentant state, not wanting to change his ways and walk in a manner worthy of Christ (Eph. 4:1; Php. 1:27; Col. 1:10; 1 Thes. 2:12). He then is out from under the protection of the church and is open to further discipline by God (Heb. 12:4-11), as well as to the attack of Satan (cf. 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Pet. 5:8). Therefore, since he is unrepentant and has left the church, no longer in fellowship, the immediate goal of the discipline has been accomplished. It is then up to the church leaders to notify their members that this person is no longer in fellowship with them. They do not need to state the specific nature as to why the person left, but simply say that he has left, not being in harmony with the church and its leadership. If the church leaders find out later that this person is attending another Christian church after leaving theirs due to the discipline process, they should notify the leaders of that church so that they are aware of the situation and can continue the discipline process. However, the other church may not want to cooperate.

Does the church discipline process always have to follow the format outlined in Matthew 18?

Though the Matthew 18 format is the preferred method of dealing with an erring brother and should be used in most cases, there may to be times when more drastic measures need to be taken. One example would be in the case of a person who is causing division within the church. Paul told Titus that a factious man should

be rejected after having received a first and second warning. He is then to be put out of the church, "knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned" (Titus 3:10-11). This situation falls one step short of approaching a brother in sin according to Matthew 18. Also, there may be situations where it is not wise for just one person to reprove another alone, such as in a situation where a man must reprove an adulteress. Or possibly when one person must reprove a violent man for his anger. It may be better if another person accompanies the reprover in such cases. However, it is always best to follow the Matthew 18 process when possible.

Summary:

Church discipline can be a very difficult process for a church to go through. Sometimes a church may have to discipline its pastor or an elder, a powerful man within the church and/or community, an elderly person, an individual who is loved by all, or even a close friend. Whoever it is, church leaders need to be faithful to the task at hand, being concerned for the honor of God, the health and testimony of the church, and the spiritual condition of the person involved. Leviticus 19:15-16 states: “You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly. You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD” (cf. Exo. 23:1-3). The church should never be daunted from its task because of who the person is who is being disciplined, for "the fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted" (Pro. 29:25). Yet on the other hand, church discipline should never be used as a tool for control and/or retribution by the pastor or church board. Such conduct is deplorable. Church discipline, when used wrongly, can ruin a person’s reputation and shatter his faith to a point where he can become despondent to the things of God, which will negatively affect his whole life. Doing such a thing to a child of God will have to one day be accounted for by those responsible. Therefore, the process of church discipline should always be entered into prayerfully and carefully so that the end result is one in which God is glorified.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Has your church ever carried out church discipline? If so, what were the circumstances which surrounded the most recent incident?

2. Is your church quick to carry out church discipline, or is it slow to begin this process? Do you think that the speed in which your church carries out church discipline is timely? Or do changes need to be made? Please explain your answer.

3. When an erring brother who appears before your church refuses to repent, does your church allow this person to continue to attend its services? Will this practice change as a result of 1 Corinthians 5:9,11-13? Please explain.

4. How would you apply this phrase, “let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Mat. 18:17), to a brother whom your church has disciplined and put out of the church?

5. How would you counsel a Christian wife to treat her husband, and/or believing children to treat their father, who has been disciplined and placed out of the church?

6. What process would you go through if another church contacted you and told you that a person who recently began attending your church is under discipline at their church? In one word, what would be the ultimate goal of this process?

   Ultimate goal: _____

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7. What would you do if you had to discipline the pastor of your church, an elder, a popular person, a rich man, or your best friend? Please keep in mind Exodus 23:1-3 and Leviticus 19:15-16.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. Have you considered the ramifications of carrying out church discipline, such as what this may mean to the person being disciplined, to those close to him, to your church and to yourself? This is what makes carrying out church discipline so difficult. Therefore please list things which you feel would be helpful for you to do now to prepare yourself spiritually and mentally before having to begin the process of church discipline. Considering this now when you are able to think about it objectively is far better than trying to prepare when you find yourself in the midst of an actual case of church discipline.

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2. Many times a pastor will be spoken against negatively in the community by the person whom the church disciplined and/or by those close to him. How would you handle this situation if this were to happen to you? Scripturally, what should be your response?

WOMEN'S ISSUES:

Women: Keeping Silent in the Church

Understanding the issue:

First Corinthians 14:33b-35 is a passage which many debate. Some use it as a license to silence women and oppress them, while others interpret it in a way that oversteps the bounds of Scripture. The purpose of this article is to attempt to understand the Apostle Paul's intent in this passage. This section of 1 Corinthians, as well as Chapter 11, are interpreted in various ways with much controversy. The author's desire is to present this material within the confines of Scripture. It is not his goal nor desire to hinder women by keeping them from carrying out God's will for them, nor to see them involved in ministries that displease God and therefore disgrace them (1 Cor. 14:35). Realizing the difficulty of this passage, the author humbly submits his understanding of this issue in the following pages.

Understanding the biblical context:

To understand these verses one needs to interpret them in the context of their chapter, then within the context of Chapters 11-14, next within the book of 1 Corinthians, followed by the context of the New Testament, and finally within the context of the whole of Scripture. Paul's main goal in 1 Corinthians is to correct error and to deal with the problems of division (1:10-17) and pride (cf. 4:6,18,19; 5:2; 8:1-2; 13:4). One needs to therefore keep these things in mind as he interprets these verses. Another issue to understand is that there obviously was a problem with the women of the Corinthian church which Paul needed to correct in Chapter 11 and again in Chapter 14. In Chapters 11 through 14, Paul focused on issues related to the church service. It is unclear, however, if the section on head coverings (11:2-16) was specific only to the worship service. After his correction concerning head coverings, Paul addressed problems the Corinthians were experiencing with the Lord's Supper (11:17-34) and spiritual gifts (12), specifically discussing how prophecy was superior to the gift of tongues, and how they were to be used within the church service (14:1-25). He then concluded with a section on church order (14:26-40). Chapter 13 -- the love chapter -- was strategically placed to remind the proud Corinthian believers (cf. 1 Cor. 1:12; 4:6,18,19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4) that love, along

with faith and hope (13:13), were to be more coveted than possessing a supernatural sign gift (cf. 13:1-2).

For a more specific context, in Chapter 14 Paul showed the Corinthians that they should not be misusing the gift of tongues in the church service (cf. vss. 13-19, 27-28). He made it clear that prophecy was the superior gift; that it edifies the church (vss. 1,3,4,5), and that it should be earnestly desired (vs. 39). Tongues on the other hand was a sign for unbelievers (vs. 22), which when misused would cause believers (who were unaware of spiritual gifts) and unbelievers alike to think that the possessors of this gift and the church in which they were using it were mad (vs. 23). It is after this portion of correction that Paul gives guidelines for the purpose of setting in order the services of the Corinthian church (vss. 26-36) since God (vs. 33) and Paul (vs. 40) wanted all things to be done properly and in order.

In verses 26-40, Paul gave the necessary guidelines to restore church order. He addressed three main issues: tongues (vss. 27-28), prophecy (vss. 29-33a) and women's conduct in the church (vss. 33b-36). Verse 26 is Paul's introductory verse in which he transitioned from his correction on tongues and prophecy to this section on church order. In doing this he asked the question: "What is *the outcome* then, brethren?" He then answered his own question at the end of the verse when he said, "Let all things be done for edification." If things are not done within the church properly and in order, people will not be edified to the greatest possible degree. How then were things to be done in an orderly fashion within the Corinthian church? First, in a service where some in attendance had the gift of tongues (the ability to speak in one or more foreign languages which they did not previously know; cf. Acts 2:1-11); and if they desired to speak in one of these tongues, only two or three of them could do so and only if there was a person present with the gift of interpretation to interpret for them. If a person was not there to interpret, they were to keep silent (vs. 28). Second, if prophets were present, only two or three of them were allowed to speak, and then as God gave them a prophecy. When God gave one of them a prophecy, the others were to keep silent (vs. 30). These things were to be done in this manner because, as Paul concluded this portion in verse 33, "for God is not *a God* of confusion but of peace." Third, women who were present in the services were to keep silent in the church (vs. 34). The question is: "Why would Paul make this statement?" Keeping in mind that Paul was continuing to correct abuses associated with church order in this section, one needs to continue within this contextual vein when interpreting these verses.

Before further consideration of this statement about women being silent in the church, please note verse 33. This verse concludes with the words, "as in all the churches of the saints." In some Bible versions this phrase completes the first half of verse 33, yet in another version (NIV) this phrase is the beginning of verse 34, which introduces verses 34-36. In the case of the Russian Synod Version, this phrase stands alone. The translators added the word, "бывать," which looks back to the previous sentence, implying that the "peace" is "to be present" in all of the churches of the saints. Because of these different translations, this begs the question: "Should this phrase be the conclusion of verse 33 or the introduction to verse 34?" Paul's statement, "for God is not *a God* of confusion but of peace," coincides with the previous context in relationship to the tongue speakers and the prophets. But for Paul to add the phrase to that context, "as in all the churches of the saints," seems to be overstating the obvious. It does not seem like a logical statement for Paul to add

to the previous context. On the other hand, if this phrase was meant to be the introduction to verse 34 as the New International Version has translated it, then the construction makes perfect sense. Therefore this passage would state: "As in all the churches of the saints, the women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church." Not only is this construction acceptable in the Greek text, it also reflects Paul's previous exhortation to the women of Corinth in 1 Corinthians 11:16 ("But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God."). Paul, in both passages, wanted to make it clear that what he was telling the women of Corinth was not written just to them, but was common, acceptable behavior for all women in all of God's churches.

Understanding the passage (verse 34):

The difficulty comes when interpreting verses 34 and 35. What does it mean that women are to keep silent in the church and are not permitted to speak? Why is it improper if they do speak, and why are they to question their husbands at home? How narrow are these commands, and how are they to be interpreted today?

Often people refer to 1 Corinthians 11 as proof that women can speak publicly in the church service for it speaks about women praying and prophesying. The assumption of course is that the context of this passage pertains to the gathering of the church. If this is the case, then there definitely seems to be a contradiction between these two chapters. Yet, from the author's study of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, there is no convincing proof that the greater context is the gathering of the church. Actually, because of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 ("A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness...to remain quiet"), the author believes to the contrary that women were not allowed to lead the church in prayer and/or prophesy publicly. There is no indication anywhere in the Scriptures that a woman was ever allowed to lead a gathering of the church.

If a prophetess did not publicly use her gift, then when did she prophesy (cf. Acts 21:9)? The ministry of a prophetess was a nonpublic ministry such as that of Huldah (cf. 2 Kings 22:14-20) and Anna (cf. Luke 2:36-38). They conveyed revelation from God privately to those God desired. This makes the most sense as one looks at the whole of Scripture and understands the biblical role of women. Practically, for a woman to have prophesied publicly to the church, she would have been in a role of authority ("thus says the Lord") and teaching, both of which Paul clearly stated is forbidden for women to do, for they were "to remain quiet" (1 Tim. 2:12). This coincides with the guidelines given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14 for the worship service. There he stated that only two or three prophets were allowed to speak, but prophetesses are not mentioned (14:29-32). Further support for this view is found in Ephesians 4:11-16. In this passage, four offices of leadership were given by Christ to the church. The purpose of these offices were for the equipping and building up of the body of Christ (see the article titled, "Pastor's and Evangelist's Equipping Ministry "). Due to the nature of these offices they could only be held by men because to be able to carry out the necessary tasks of these offices the people in them would have to teach and be in authority over the entire church.

Were women allowed to pray publicly in a church service according to 1 Corinthians 11? The underlying issue of 1 Corinthians 11 is submission. In that chapter Paul talked about God's divine and created order, which are the reasons for submission and why women are not to lead the church. This would include leading it in prayer (see the appendix article titled, "Head Coverings"). This is the responsibility of men (contrast verse 8 of 1 Timothy 2 with verses 9-14), specifically of the pastor and elders. Therefore, women are to keep silent in the church service and "are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says" (1 Cor. 14:34). What does the Law say about this? Genesis 2:20 states that God made Eve as a helper for Adam (submission is implied in this statement). Genesis 3:16 states that as a result of the curse, though women will desire to rule over their husbands, their husbands will rule over them (submission is also implied). Therefore the Law spoke about the underlying principle of subjection but not specifically whether a woman could or could not speak publicly in a religious gathering (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3; 14:34; Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:11,12; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1-6).

Understanding the passage (verse 35):

The issue in 1 Corinthians 14 about why women were to keep silent in the church becomes more apparent in verse 35. There Paul said: "If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home." Why would Paul say this after stating that women are to keep quiet in the church? How does this phrase fit the context? Whereas verse 34 is a general statement about women not speaking and thus usurping the role of men in the church (cf. 1 Tim. 2:12), verse 35 addresses the specific problem which concerns the prophets (vss. 29-32). In context, Paul just concluded discussing the ministry of the prophets. After a prophet spoke, the "others" were to pass judgment on what he said, discerning if what was spoken was of the Holy Spirit or not. Who were the "others"? Were they the other prophets? The church leaders? The men of the church? One very strong indication that this is a reference to all the men of the church is found in verse 37. There Paul stated: "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment." Paul was telling his readers that if they believed they were prophets or spiritual, they were to pass judgment on what he had written in this epistle; and in so doing they would know that it was the Lord's commandment. This is what the "others" were to do after the prophets spoke. But please note that Paul did not say that if they were prophets or spiritual, but if they believed they were prophets or spiritual, they were to pass judgment. This broader statement then allows for not only true prophets and spiritual leaders to pass judgment, but for all the men of the church. Therefore, if men thought themselves spiritually minded, they could pass judgment.

Practically, how did this process of judgment take place? All indications are that during the services of the church there was a time when questions were allowed to be asked of the speaker (i.e., prophet, pastor). It was during this time of passing judgment that the problem arose which Paul addressed in this passage. It seems that the women were questioning the speakers. This is a logical conclusion when considering the fact that only women were prohibited from speaking in the church and not men. If women wanted clarification of those things spoken in church, they were to ask their husbands at home. Therefore what seems to have been occurring in the Corinthian church was that the women were questioning the prophets (and

maybe other men who delivered messages as well) about what they had taught. Paul said that this was improper, or in other words, it was disgraceful. This was a very strong reprimand for the women. He made it clear that this behavior was not acceptable. Only the men could clarify things which were spoken in the church service, passing judgment upon them.

Having the ability to question the speakers was important for at least two reasons during that time of church history. The first is that it helped the church to stay pure from false teachers by making sure that what they said was of the Holy Spirit, especially when they claimed to be apostles and prophets (cf. Acts 13:6; 2 Cor. 11:13; 2 Pet. 2:1). The second reason this would have been a very important aspect of the service was because much of the New Testament was unavailable. Actually the majority of the people could not even afford single books of the Old Testament, let alone the Old Testament in its entirety. Only the very rich could afford those things (e.g., the Ethiopian eunuch; Acts 8:28). Therefore in the church services, the people in attendance were receiving from the prophets oral revelation from God. Once what was said was judged as truth from God by the men of the church, the husband as the head of his home was then responsible to learn, understand, and then teach that to his wife and children at home (cf. Deut. 4:9-10; 6:4-7, 20-25; 11:18-19; Psa. 78:1-8; Eph. 6:4; Eph 5:24). Also, since everything in the church service was to be done in order (1 Cor. 14:40), having just men ask questions with the goal of teaching their families at home would facilitate this process. Since "a woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness" (1 Tim. 2:11), she was not allowed to question the speakers publicly.

Understanding further context:

Paul then ended this portion of the passage by reminding the Corinthians that they were to obey the word they had received (vs. 36). The Word of God did not originate from them, and it was not given only to them. Therefore, if they were spiritual, they would understand that Paul's words were God's commandment (vs. 37). If they did not recognize this fact, then they would not be recognized (vs. 38); the implication is by God and the church (cf. Mat. 18:19-20; Rom. 16:17; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Thes. 3:14). Paul then concluded the chapter by stating that they as a church should desire prophesy in their midst, although those gifted with tongues should not be forbidden to speak (vs. 39). "But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner" (vs. 40).

Concluding remarks:

In conclusion, the believer ought to understand the proper application of this passage. The context is church order, and Paul wanted all things to be done in an orderly manner. One aspect of church order Paul focused on was a command given by God (vs. 34) -- that women were not to speak in the church in a role of authority or to ask questions publicly of those who did (e.g., such as the prophets). This was the role of their husbands. It was also improper for women to be in a role of church leadership. Single and widowed women were also not allowed to do these things. Although they did not have husbands who were in authority over them, they could

ask their fathers; or if that was not possible, other men who were in attendance, but only after the service.

Since most churches today do not have this kind of interaction during a service between the pastor and the people of his church, women speaking in the church is really not a major issue in most places in the world. Although this is the case, in church services women are to subject themselves to the men who are their head. Can women ever speak in the church? In 1 Corinthians 14:26, Paul said: "...When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation..." The words, "each one," implies the idea of all of the believers present, including women. Since the psalms were poetry and songs, it could be assumed that the women were allowed to read a psalm or even sing (cf. Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), though the others things listed (teaching, prophesying, speaking in a tongue or interpretation) were specifically for the men of the church due to the nature of each gift. First Corinthians 14 does not seem to prevent women from praying publicly outside of the main gathering of the church or asking questions publicly in such gatherings as prayer groups, Bible studies, etc. This passage is talking about the gathering of the church for the main church services (see the appendix article titled, "Church Defined"). Therefore, it seems that women are allowed more freedom in other gatherings.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Does your church allow women to lead any portion of your worship services (e.g., worship leader, choir director, etc.)? Will you make any changes in this practice?

2. Do women ever speak out inappropriately in the services of your church services? What will your response be to this in the future?

3. Are women allowed to lead the church services in prayer? Is this appropriate?

4. Considering 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15, does God desire women to be pastors, elders, or leaders in the local church? Please explain your answer using these passages.

Please note: If your church needs to make changes in regards to the role of women, please do so in love, with humility, and in a way that no one is embarrassed. Keep in mind the article presented within this manual titled, "Women's Roles Defined." Women are equal to men in the eyes of God, although they do have different roles and levels of responsibility. God loves and cares for them dearly, and so should the church leaders and men of the church. They, like you, are fellow heirs of the grace of life; therefore show them the honor that they deserve so that your prayers will not be hindered" (cf. 1 Pet. 3:7).

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. As you lay the foundation for your new church, it will be important to lay a foundation which is biblical, fulfills the desires of God, and yet does not overstep them. In other words, though women are to keep silent in the church as defined in this article, please remember that they are important to the church and its function. What can you do to make sure that your church does not demean them simply because their role and level of responsibility is different than men's?

2. Women keeping silent in the church goes against the spirit of the world in which the church exists. What can you do to foster such submission by the women of your church when the culture in which they live tells them that this is unacceptable behavior, archaic?

3. When the men of a church are living for Christ and manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, their godly behavior creates an atmosphere within the church which makes it easier for women to submit. Why is this true? Why is this important?

WOMEN'S ISSUES:

Women: Roles Defined

Misunderstandings:

The role of women in the church today has become an area of disagreement, tension, and division. Therefore it is necessary to clarify what the Scriptures do and do not say about this issue; what is cultural and what is not. Although there undoubtedly are some difficult passages to understand regarding the role of women in the church, one must do his best to understand the main issues. It needs to be stated at the outset of this article that some women, especially in our day, wrongly justify their overstepping the bounds of Scripture in regards to their role in the church. Having said that, it must also be stated that too many times men in the church also overstep the bounds of Scripture in regard to the role of women in the church, demeaning and restricting them beyond what the Scriptures mandate. Both extremes are wrong!

Her equality and honor:

In the discussion of this topic, the words of the Apostle Paul in Galatians 3:26-29 need to be considered: "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise." Paul's point was that in Christ all believers are sons of God and are clothed with Christ, no matter who they are, what their status in life, what their race or nationality, or what their sex; for in Christ they are all one. God does not and will not consider these things as important in His assessment of believers. The Scriptures are clear -- God shows no partiality (Job. 34:19; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:9; 1 Pet. 1:17), even between men and women. God looks at the heart of a person (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7; Psa. 147:10; Pro. 31:30), not the sex; for the heart He will judge (cf. Jer. 11:20; Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 4:5; Heb. 4:12).

Another passage that establishes women's equality is found in the very first chapter of the Bible. In Genesis 1:27, it is recorded: "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Women, as well as men, are created in the very image and likeness of God. They are equal to men and are to be honored as God's special creation just as men are. By the very fact that woman was created from man (cf. Gen. 2:21-22) makes the solidarity between them very special and unique (1 Cor. 11:11-12). This is not true about any other of God's creation.

In God's plan, He created men and women with a dependency upon one another. In 1 Corinthians 11:11-12, Paul said: "However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man *has his birth* through the woman; and all things originate from God." In the Lord, God did not create men and women to be independent of one another, but interdependent. This is also seen in His design for marriage in that husbands and wives were created to be one flesh (Gen. 2:24; Mat. 19:5-6). Since this is true, the husband needs to understand that how he treats his wife, in a sense, so he treats himself since she is an intricate part of him, and he of her. Therefore because of God's design, this union is never to be broken and is to abide until death (Mal. 2:16; Mat. 19:6; Mark 10:9; cf. Mat. 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; 1 Cor. 7:1-15).

Because God created women in His likeness, "You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered" (1 Pet. 3:7). Christian women are to be shown honor because they are fellow heirs of the grace of life. The fact that they are weaker vessels does not mean that they are to be taken advantage of, mistreated or used. The Apostle Paul, when discussing the way in which God composed the body of Christ, said: "And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; or again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those *members* of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need *of it.* But God has *so* composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that *member* which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:21-26). The marriage relationship reflects this truth since both the Christian husband and his wife are a part of the body of Christ. In applying this to the marriage relationship, although the woman is the weaker vessel physically and emotionally (not spiritually, intellectually or capably), the husband is not to treat his wife as if he has no need of her. "On the contrary," Paul said: 1) she is necessary; 2) upon her more honor is to be bestowed so that there is no division (between her and her husband); 3) she is to be cared for; and 4) when she suffers or is honored, he is to suffer with her and be honored with her. If however a Christian husband does not treat his wife in this manner, as the weaker vessel, one result will be a hindered and ineffective prayer life as Peter stated. Therefore, because she is a weaker vessel, it is his responsibility to love her as his own body, nourishing (caring for all of her physical needs) and cherishing her (treating her as worthy and very valuable), even being

willing to die for her (cf. Eph. 5:25-30). This is honoring her as a fellow heir in Christ who is created in the image and likeness of God.

Christian men need to understand that passages such as Romans 12:10, Galatians 5:13, Philippians 2:3-4, Ephesians 4:2 and 5:21, and 1 Peter 2:17, are not passages which speak only about how men are to treat men, or how women are to treat men, but also about how men are to treat women; including their wives. Church elders also need to remember that they are to be examples to the church (1 Tim. 4:12; 1 Pet. 5:3), and this includes how they love and treat their wives. Others will follow their example. Therefore, in Christ, believers are all equal, even though they have different roles and different responsibilities.

Her limitations in the home:

God has stipulated certain limitations in the Scriptures in regard to the husband/wife relationship and the role of women in the church. These limitations are not to be understood as inadequacies in regard to her spirituality, intelligence and/or abilities. To the contrary, women, as well as men, can be very spiritual, intelligent and capable. However, they do have limitations placed upon them by God. They are due to:

1. Divine order -- 1 Cor. 11:3
2. Created order (design) -- 1 Tim. 2:13
    a. She was created as a helpmate -- Gen. 2:18
    b. She is a weaker vessel -- 1 Pet. 3:7
    c. She was created to bear, nurture and rear children -- cf. Gen. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:9; 5:14; Titus 2:4-5
3. Her deception (by Satan) -- 1 Tim. 2:14

In God's divine order, He created man to be the authoritative head of woman (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3; Gen. 3:16). From the beginning, God never designed the home to be a place where the wife would be the leader.

God's created order establishes the fact that God created man to be the head of the home. God formed man first from the dust of the ground and then breathed into him the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). Man was created first, and it is due to this order that God established him as the head of the home (Gen. 2:22; 1 Tim. 2:13; 1 Cor. 11:8-9). God took a rib from Adam, and with it He fashioned a woman (Gen. 2:21-22) who was to be a helpmate for him (Gen. 2:18). "For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake," Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9. Because of this Paul also wrote: "Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything" (Ephesians 5:22-24). The woman is to be in subjection to her husband since he is her head just as Christ is the head of the church and is to be in subjection to Him (Num. 5:19,29; 1 Pet. 3:5-6; 1 Cor. 11:3). It is due to this position that God has placed him in, as head of the home, that his wife is to respect him. Paul stated this in Ephesians 5:33: "Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife

must *see to it* that she respects her husband." Although he may not have character qualities which are respectable, she is nonetheless to respect him due to his position as her head. God will bless the wife who does this.

What is her limitation in the home? As the wife, she is not to lead the home by usurping her husband's authority and responsibility. One difficulty with this is that it is in a woman's nature to desire to rule over her husband. In Genesis 3:16, when God cursed women for Eve's part in the fall of mankind into sin, God told her: "...I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." The phrase, "yet your desire will be for your husband," is speaking of her desire to rule over him. Some may interpret this phrase as sexual desire for him, but the context of this verse and the reality of life should cause a person to interpret this verse differently. Another reason is that the last phrase of this verse states that though her desire will be for her husband, "he will rule over you." The issue is who will be in subjection to whom? Please note if a husband is non-responsive to the needs and leadership of his family, the wife will generally take over this role, not only due to necessity, but also because of her nature. From the beginning there has been a struggle between the sexes, which is still evident today.

However, in the Christian home, many women desire to submit to their husbands' authority in obedience to God. They understand the struggle of desiring to rule versus being the submissive wife. Therefore, in this discussion, two issues need to be considered. The first is: "What is biblical submission?" The second: "What is the husband's part in making submission an easier task for his wife?"

Biblical submission is not forced submission. When the Christian husband and wife are both walking by the Spirit and not carrying out the desires of the flesh (cf. Gal. 5:16), the husband will not need to force his wife to submit to him; and she will not need to force herself to submit. True submission is voluntary. Actually, the phrase, "forced submission," is an oxymoron for a forced submission is not true submission. It is slavery. Submission must be a voluntary act of the will for it to be true submission. True submission is seen in the life of Jesus who voluntarily submitted to the Father when coming to earth and when going to the cross (cf. Php. 2:5-8; John 10:17-18; Isa. 53:7; Heb. 10:7; 12:2). Jesus had a choice, and His decision was to subject Himself to the Father's will. Therefore for a wife to truly submit to her husband's authority, she needs to make the decision to do so even if her husband is not a good husband, not a good provider, not a good father, nor a man who is easily respected. God will bless her for her submission to him. Her attitude in submitting to such a man, or even to a good husband, should be one of submission to God, desiring to please Him (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31). Although wives are never to be slaves, Paul's exhortation to slaves was that they were to submit to their masters in this way (cf. Eph. 6:5-7; Col. 3:22-24). The wife who submits in a godly manner to a disobedient husband, displaying chaste and respectful behavior, may see him repent as a result of her obedience to God (cf. 1 Pet. 3:1).

How can a husband make his wife's submission to his authority easier? Ephesians 5 holds the answer to this question. Paul told Christian husbands: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (vs. 25). He also told them in verses 28-30: "So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;

for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church, because we are members of His body." If a Christian husband loves his wife in this manner, she will be able to submit to him much easier. Why? First John 4:18 states: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love." If a woman knows that her husband truly loves her as Christ loved the church, loving her as his own body, nourishing and cherishing her, even being willing to die for her, she will have no fear of submitting to him. She will not be experiencing or expecting harsh treatment from him (punishment), but instead love as described in Ephesians 5 and 1 Corinthians 13. This is a man she would willingly submit to.

Her limitations in the church:

God has also stipulated certain limitations in the Scriptures in regard to the role of women in the church. Again, these limitations are not to be understood as inadequacies in regard to her spirituality, intelligence and/or abilities. Women, as well as men, can be very spiritual, intelligent and capable individuals. However, they do have limitations upon them which have been imposed by God.

In 1 Timothy 2:11-12, Paul stated: " A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet." Paul gave two reasons why a woman is not allowed to teach or exercise authority over a man in 1 Timothy 2. The first is God's created order. He stated this in verse 13: "For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve." As discussed previously, woman was taken from man, was created to be his helpmate, and is in subjection to him for this reason. Paul also made this point to the Corinthians when he said: "For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake" (1 Cor. 11:8-9). Because of these reasons, a woman is not to be in authority over a man or teach a man; but instead, as verse 11 states, she "must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness" in the church from the male leadership. (See the article titled, "Women: Keep Silent in the Church.")

The second reason given that women are not allowed "to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet," is a result of Eve's deception. Paul stated in verse 14: "And *it was* not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." Because Eve was deceived (she being the representative for women), women are not allowed to teach or be in authority over men. Adam on the other hand (he being the representative for men), because he was created first and was not deceived, men are allowed to teach men, women, and children, and be in authority over them. Was this simply a judgment upon women? Does it speak to a tendency she has as a part of her nature which does not suit her well for such a position? Or is there some other reason? One can only speculate. But whatever the reason, this is an imposed limitation of God upon her.

As stated twice previously, this is not an issue of a woman's spirituality, intelligence and/or abilities. Women are important in the plan and creation of God. Paul elaborated on this in verse 15 when he spoke about the very important role of women in the body of Christ. There he said: "But *women* will be preserved through

the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint." The key to this verse is the Greek word which is translated in this verse as "preserved," or "saved," depending on the translation. This word which has the idea of taking a person from a negative state or situation and bringing them to a positive state of security, restoration, protection, etc., can also be translated as, "make whole," "heal," "be whole." Therefore, one needs to determine how the Apostle Paul meant this word to be understood in this context.

When considering context, one must first note that there is a condition present in this verse. The condition is this, that a woman will be preserved through the bearing of children "if" she continues in faith and love and sanctity (holy living) in self-restraint (self-control). Summing up these four characteristics, it is safe to say that these are character qualities of a godly woman. Therefore "if" a woman is godly (implying that she is a Christian), Paul stated that she will be "preserved through the bearing of children."

Now the question is: How will she be preserved or saved though the bearing of children? In the context of this passage, and when considering other exhortations to women in the Bible (cf. Gen. 3:16; Pro. 31:27-29; 1 Tim. 5:10,14; Titus 2:4-5), a different yet acceptable translation of this Greek word which better fits this context is "made whole" or "made complete." Therefore, a godly woman will be "made whole" or "made complete" through the bearing of children. Understanding this verse in this way, and considering it in the context of the entire passage, Paul could be understood as saying that the priority of the godly woman is not in teaching or being in authority over a man, but in being a mother. Through this she will obtain her honor, glory and dignity which speaks about her significance. Although she may not be in an influential position within the church, she is in a very influential position within the plan of God in her home. It is there that she will be able to influence the next generation, the church and community, and the world through her testimony and as she rears her children, who will be a part of these realms. As a result of her influence, this godly woman may be preparing future pastors, elders, cross-cultural missionaries, deacons, deaconesses, and other godly, influential people who can impact the world for Christ. But if she does not live godly, she will not be made whole through the bearing of children because she will not be satisfied with her God-ordained role. She will desire more, possibly wanting to be a pastor or elder, desiring position and influence in another sphere more than fulfilling God's desire for her. Fulfilling her God-given position, she will be made whole and find her place of importance in the body of Christ. Also please consider that if a mother's family is not her priority, then who will make her family a priority? This is a disturbing thought as one thinks of all those in the world vying for her family's attention, many wanting to influence it through their godless philosophies and seductions. It is a fact that if her family is not her priority, they will be the priority of someone else. The question is, "Who?"

What about the case of a single woman or a married woman who does not have children. How can they find their significance in reference to their role within the plan of God? Though this passage does not address this issue, it is the author's opinion that this may be accomplished in two ways. In the case of a single woman, she can give herself in full devotion to the things of God as Anna the prophetess did (Luke 2:36-37). Paul himself said that it is better for a person to remain single so that he or she can give themselves wholly to the things of God (cf. 1 Cor. 7:8,32-35).

For a married woman who does not or is not able to have children, she and her husband could consider adoption through which they can give unwanted children the love of Christ and the gospel. Another option would be that though married, she could give her time to the service of Christ rather than to the care of children.

Some interpret 1 Timothy 2:9-15 from a cultural perspective. The problem with this view is that women are not to teach or be in authority over men, not because of cultural issues specific to the time of Paul, but because of created order and the fall of man which took place thousands of years before Paul penned these words. The issue is not a cultural one, but an authority one. The question is: "Are women, and men for that matter, willing to accept the authority of the Word of God, His preordained created order, and His restrictions on women as a result of the deception of Eve, or are they not?" Actually, the issue of women's role in the church is really as simple as these two reasons given by Paul. And although feminists and those who rally to their cause try to explain away the authority of this passage as not being applicable for the church today as it was during the time of Paul, this is not the case. For both men and women, if they are faithful in the realms which God has prepared for them, they will be successful and rewarded by Him for their faithfulness. This will not happen however when they step into spheres where they ought not to be.[11]

Her freedoms:

Although women have limitations placed upon them, they also have many freedoms within the body of Christ in which they can express their spiritual gifts, talents and abilities. Following are some thoughts about how they can serve within the framework of Scripture.

Within the local church God has created a role for godly women, that of being a deaconess (see the article titled, "Church Leadership Roles Defined"). A deaconess, like her male counterpart the deacon, is a servant of the church. Within this role, she may serve the church in various functions determined by the elders. Her only limitation is that she cannot teach men or be in authority over them.

Within the Scriptures are examples of some very godly women who served in such roles. Phoebe (Rom. 16:1-2) was a servant of the church and a helper of many. There was Priscilla who risked her life for others (Rom. 16:3-4), was knowledgeable in the Word and able to teach others (Acts 18:24-26), and who opened her home so that a church could meet there (1 Cor. 16:19). Anna was another godly servant in the temple (Luke 2:36-37) who as a widow and served night and day involving herself in prayer and fasting. Each of these women are mentioned in the eternal Word of God for their love of Him expressed through their service to Him. Women today have many opportunities to serve in this way.

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[11] The truths taught in this passage applied to Priscilla who was a gifted and committed woman (cf. Rom. 16:3-5) and teacher (cf. Acts 18:26). She, along with her husband, ministered together in the church of Ephesus (cf. Acts 18:18-19) where Timothy was the pastor (cf. 1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 4:12) and to whom these truths were written. (Saucy, Dr. Mark; Department Chair and Prof. Of Theology, Kiev Theological Seminary, Kiev, Ukraine)

Although women are not permitted to teach men or be in authority over them, they are not limited in teaching women and children and having authority over them. Actually in Titus 2:3-5, Paul instructed older women to teach younger women: "Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, *to be* sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored." Therefore women are able to teach Bible studies, Sunday School, children's clubs, be conference speakers, etc. They have much to add to the church and its work. These opportunities can be very rewarding.

Some other ways in which women can be involved in ministry are listed below, although they are not limited to these:

- Evangelism
- Cross-cultural missionary (doctor, nurse, teacher, evangelism)
- Assisting with church plants
- Bible translation work
- Missionary pilot
- Women's ministries
- Children's ministries
- Counseling ministry
- Teach in a Christian school
- Open her home for church meetings, Bible studies or for a new church plant
- Church secretary
- Music ministry
- Hospital ministry
- Prison ministry
- Orphanage ministry
- Church librarian
- Write and/or read poetry in the church
- Write devotional material for women and children
- Write books for women and children
- Write and/or perform dramas
- Ministry of hospitality
- Ministry of prayer and fasting
- Computer work for the church

Outside the home:

Are Christian women limited to working only in their home? No, they are not. Yet, when one considers their main role as mothers, their family should and needs to be their main priority (this is discussed further in the next major point). Unmarried women on the other hand, who do not have the responsibility of a family, have many opportunities through employment to express themselves and their faith in the world.

Married women do at times find themselves in circumstances where they need to work outside the home. This may be due to the death or severe sickness of a husband, a divorce, a difficult economy, an alcoholic husband, etc. This can make life for her (and her family) very difficult because she needs to care for her family as

well as support them financially. This creates a great division of her time, efforts and energy. If she also attempts to serve in the church up and beyond her other responsibilities, it may simply be too much for her to handle. This is where the church needs to be involved, sensitive and understanding; trying to help women in these situations. As the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:26: "And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it."

What about the married woman who does not find herself in a difficult situation as described above? Is she restricted only to caring for her family? When one views the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31, a very industrious woman is observed. She is a woman who obviously cares for her family and its needs (vss. 15, 21-22, 27), but also finds other opportunities to help her husband provide for their family (vss. 13-14, 16-19, 24). Not only that, she is a woman who ministers to the needs of others (vs. 20), being a woman of faith and godliness who is praised for these virtues (vs. 25-26, 28-31). She is an excellent wife who always does her husband good (vss. 10-13); and as a result of her efforts, helps her husband to be known and respected in his community (vs. 23). Although it is the responsibility of the wife to minister first to her husband and children, she also has the opportunity to help in the support of her family alongside her husband if this does not negatively impact her family, or if circumstances warrant it.

Her most important role:

A woman has many freedoms in the body of Christ as was discussed above. First Timothy 2:15 speaks to the issue of a woman's most important role in the body of Christ, that of being a mother. (Since 1 Timothy 2:15 was elaborated on earlier in this article, it will not be discussed again.) Paul also speaks about this important role of women in the home in two other passages. He stated in 1 Timothy 5:14: "Therefore, I want younger *widows* to get married, bear children, keep house, *and* give the enemy no occasion for reproach." Then in Titus 2:3-5, Paul said: "Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, *to be* sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored." As Paul spoke to women in these passages, he did so with a focus on their main role -- that being within the home and caring for their families. If a woman does this well, she will not dishonor the Word of God by her behavior. If she does not act accordingly, God's Word can be dishonored. The role of a mother is an important one which can have a tremendous impact in her family and in the lives of those who are watching as she obeys the Word of God and lives for Him.

Her importance:

Another consideration in regards to the importance of women in the body of Christ is how God has created and values them in the Word of God.

The nature of women is very special. They are generally characterized by the following traits:

- Faith
- Hope
- Love
- Trust
- Tenderness
- Caring
- Nurturing

These are very important character traits in the sight of God which make women special, making them who they are. These are also traits which men find appealing in women and which attracts them to women.

As one ponders the importance of women in the Bible, it should be remembered that a woman bore our Savior, they were the first to be told of the resurrection of Jesus by the angels (cf. Mat. 28:1-7), and they were the first ones to see the risen Christ (cf. Mat. 28:8-10). Women traveled with Jesus and supported Him financially (Luke 8:1-3). They followed Him on the way to His crucifixion, ministering to Him, and staying with Him during His greatest time of need (cf. Mat. 27:55-56) while His disciples had fled from Him (cf. Mat. 26:56), and one had even denied Him (cf. Mat. 26:69-75). Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a favored one of God (Luke 1:28-30) who by faith trusted the angel who spoke to her (Luke 1:38), thereby becoming the mother of the Savior of the world (Luke 1:31-33). When there were no godly men who trusted God in Israel, Deborah the prophetess by faith gave Israel the victory (cf. Jud. 4:8-10,14) (see appendix article titled, "Deborah"). In Hebrews 11, which lists the great believers of the faith, the following women are listed: Sarah (vs. 11), Jochebed the mother of Moses (vs. 23), Rahab (vs. 31), and other women (vs. 35).

Although women have a different role than men in the plan of God, they are no less important than them in the eyes of God (Gal. 3:28). They, as men, can and do make a great contribution to the work of the church. Their influence results from their personal faith which extends to their family, to their church and community; within their spheres of influence.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the general attitude of your pastor and elders toward women in your church? Are they respected by them as equals? If not, in your opinion, how are they treated?

2. How do you and your church leaders treat your wives? Are you setting a good example for the other men of the church? How can you set a better example?

3. Women are to be treated as weaker vessels and therefore honored by the men of their church. Is this done in your church? If so, how is it done? If this is not done, how do you see a lack of regard for women manifested in your church?

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4. Do the men of your church understand the difference between the role of women in the church versus their position in Christ? How would you explain this difference?

5. If the way women are treated in your church and in their homes is not biblical, what attitudes in your church need to be changed? With whom does the change need to begin?

6. What can be done in your church to raise the status of women to a biblical level? List some ideas below.

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7. What ministries does your church have which minister to the women of your church?

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8. What ministries does your church have which minister to the women of your community?

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9. What ministries does your church have which help women who have alcoholic husbands, who have been abandoned by their husbands, or who are abused by them? How is your church making a difference in these families?

10. What opportunities do the women of your church have to use their spiritual gifts to minister in the body of Christ?

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11. Does your church have a biblical view of the role of women in the church? Are there women in your church who are in positions of authority in which they should not be? If so, what positions?

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12. Are there women in your church who are restricted from ministering in areas they should be allowed to serve in? If so, which positions?

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13. If your church is not reflecting a biblical role of women, what can it do to change this? List some ideas below.

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SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. As you begin your new church, you have the opportunity to lay a biblical foundation for the role of women in your church which properly reflects Scripture. Below, define what is permissible and what is not permissible for women to do in the local church. Use Scripture to validate your position.

   Permissible:
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   Not Permissible:
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2. How will you honor women as fellow heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7) so that they will receive proper respect in their homes and in the church?

3. Define biblical submission. Please keep in mind that as women are to submit to their husbands, men are to submit one to another (Rom. 13:1-5; 1 Cor. 16:16; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 2:13; 5:5). Therefore submission is not just for women, but for men as well. When answering, please take into account Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 5:21-30, Philippians 2:3-4, Colossians 3:18, Titus 2:5, and 1 Peter 3:1-7. How will you integrate this teaching into your church so that it will be a characteristic of both men and women?

4. Women have many important roles which they can carry out in the church, yet their most important role is in the home. What will you do in your church to encourage motherhood and emphasize that a woman's ministry to her family is vital to the church now and in the future?

5. It is not uncommon for churches today to allow women to hold positions of leadership which are not appropriate for them according to the Bible. Church leaders may allow this because the men of the church are not fulfilling these positions. What will you do as you lay the foundation of your church to make sure that one day this will not happen?

THE PASTOR:

Pastor's Family

The pastor's family:

The pastor's family -- it is the most important ministry that he has! Too often though his family does not come first. It comes last, after the other people in the church have been served. Many times this becomes evident when the pastor's children are known in the church and in the community as children who are not well-behaved, or when they have a double life, living sinfully behind his back. These generally are signs of a family in which the children have been neglected, with other people and/or things put before them. Please note that though this article speaks to the pastor's family, what is stated here is just as relevant for the other elders of the church. The pastor is the focus of this article because he is the most visible elder in the church and community.

Some pastors think their children will automatically understand that they are important people in the community and have important work to do; saving the souls of the lost and ministering to the needs of the saints. But what their children believe is that their father does not have time for them. They see themselves as unimportant in his eyes compared to others in the church or in the community. The pastor's wife may also feel the same. The result of this may be that she and her husband do not have a good relationship. In such a situation, it is possible that the pastor's wife may become bitter; feeling that the people of the church are her enemies who have taken her husband away from her.

The pastor's family's needs:

The pastor should never forget that his wife and children also have needs. They need his time, his love, and his attention too, not just the leftovers and scraps which fall from his table. He needs to help his wife when she needs something fixed in the house or when she simply needs a listening ear and his companionship. He needs to take the time to be at his children's soccer games or school events; talking with them and being there for them with a ready, listening ear. When a pastor does these things, his wife and children will know and feel that they are important in his

life; that they are loved and have his full attention. They then will be more willing to sacrifice when he is called away for emergency situations.

The pastor who does not invest in his family from the beginning will pay dearly in the end. He who does not have his family in order, according to the Apostle Paul, is not fit to be a pastor (1 Tim. 3:4-5; Titus 1:6). This does not mean that the pastor, his wife and children are perfect. It does mean that his family is stable and under control, following God. If a pastor does not have his family under control, then for the sake of his family and his church, he needs to relinquish his position and work at loving his family and bringing them back to where they should be biblically. Bringing his family into order is not to be done by force or with expressions like: "I have to leave the ministry because of you! Get your life in order and listen to me!" This may actually be the problem. They did listen, maybe not to his words, but to his actions. Instead, he needs to invest his life in theirs by loving them. It is easier to invest the time necessary in these relationships on a day-to-day basis rather than neglecting them, and then one day trying to salvage what is left when it may already be too late. Such behavior is ungodly and not fair to the pastor's wife and children. They deserve a lot better.

The pastor's family's adversary:

It is important for the pastor to remember the words of the Apostle Peter when he said: "Be of sober *spirit,* be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). The pastor and his family are some of those whom Satan earnestly desires to devour. If he can destroy them, then he has accomplished a great feat. Satan may attempt this in many ways. He may draw the pastor's children into sin such as drinking, smoking, drug use, pornography, sex, listening to ungodly music, etc. He may sow discord between the pastor and his wife so that they no longer get along, fighting a lot and having a home where there is no peace and harmony. How many times have stories been told of a pastor, or even his wife, running off with someone in the church and committing adultery? Too many times. The reason Satan pursues the pastor and his family especially is because if he can destroy and discredit them, then he can negatively impact the church and its testimony in the community. This may cause people to doubt the claims of the gospel and its power. What can be done to protect the pastor and his family?

The pastor's relationship with God:

The pastor needs to make sure that he maintains a close walk with God. This is his number one priority and relationship. If this relationship is not right, then the other aspects of his life will not be right either (John 15:5). Therefore he needs to be: 1) having a personal time of Bible reading and prayer, preferably at the start of each day; 2) memorizing Scripture on a regular basis; 3) studying the Word of God and applying what he is learning to his life; 4) fellowshipping with other like-minded believers; and 5) serving the Lord for the right reasons, not simply doing so in order to have a place of authority, position, power and/or financial gain in the church (1 Tim. 3:3; 1 Pet. 5:2). If the pastor's relationship with God is not growing and alive, his spiritual life will not be growing and alive either. This will negatively affect his

relationship with his Heavenly Father and ultimately with his family. (See the article titled, "Spiritual Disciplines.")

The pastor's relationship with his wife:

The second relationship the pastor needs to protect is his relationship with his wife. The passage which speaks the most about this relationship is found in Ephesians 5. Though often men like to focus on verses 22-24 (a wife's submission to her husband), they tend to forget the importance of verses 25-33. It is interesting to note in this passage (vss. 22-33) that there are 3 1/2 verses and 2 commands which pertain to wives, and 8 1/2 verses and 4 commands which pertain to husbands. Whereas the wife is to submit (vss 22-24) and respect her husband (vs. 33), the husband is to: 1) love his wife sacrificially (vss. 25-28, 33); 2) nourish her (vs. 29); 3) cherish her (vs. 29); and 4) cleave to her (vs. 31).

How is he to fulfill these commands? In regards to loving his wife, he is to love her as defined in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. If he does not love her in this way, then it does not matter how great a preacher or teacher he is because he is nothing more than a "noisy gong or a clanging symbol" (1 Cor. 13:1). In addition, if he does not love her as he should, it is of no value how well he knows the Word of God or how great a man of faith he is because before God he is "nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2; cf. Jam. 1:21-25). Furthermore if he does not love her in accordance with this passage, it matters not how generous he is to the poor nor even how willing he is to sacrifice himself as a martyr for the Lord because doing these things will be of no profit to him (1 Cor. 13:3). Love therefore is to reign supreme. This love, which is a facet of the fruit of the Spirit, is to be manifested with the other facets of the fruit as well: "joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23). These facets of his faith are to be manifested at all times with all people, especially with his family. Often times this behavior can be neglected and forgotten toward the ones he is to love the most -- his wife who is his companion by covenant (Malachi 2:14) and his children; the fruit of that union. Therefore, "you husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered" (1 Pet. 3:7). "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:27-28). Consequently, she is to be treated as a fellow heir in Christ and as a one-flesh partner.

The pastor is to nourish his wife. This pertains to his care for her. He is to provide for her needs such as clothing, food, health care, etc. Please note that meeting the physical needs of his wife is his primary responsibility, not hers, although she may help him with this task (cf. Pro. 31:13-16). He is to cherish her as well. This word has the idea of loving her tenderly and valuing her as one would a highly prized gift, for such she is; a gift from God (cf. Pro. 18:22). How does one care for a highly prized gift? Carefully, delicately, respectfully, being jealous of it (in a healthy manner), protecting it, and loving it. This is how a pastor, or any man for that matter, should cherish his wife.

The pastor, when he marries his wife, is joined together to her. Though this union -- this act of being bound together -- is a one-time act which occurs at the start of marriage (Gen. 2:24), it is also the beginning of a process. Therefore, the two who were united are never to separate (Mat. 19:6; Mark 10:8-9). The pastor needs to resolve that he will never divorce his wife, but continue to cleave to her throughout good times and bad.[12]

It should be the goal of every couple to work together as a team and to complement one another, each using their strengths to help the other where they are weak. This means allowing the strengths of your wife to complete you where you are weak. For some men this can be a humbling experience, but the pastor who does not allow his wife to complete him (maybe due to his pride or his being shortsighted) is foolish. He is neglecting a resource available to him that God prepared and gave to him as his helpmate (cf. Gen. 2:18) in life and ministry. God, knowing each person's weaknesses, provides others in the body of Christ (such as his wife) to come alongside and help him (cf. 1 Cor. 12:20-25). Work together properly and wisely with the wife God has given you!

The pastor's relationship with his children:

The next relationship that the pastor needs to protect is his relationship with his children. Along with the pastor's wife, children also are a blessing and gift from the Lord (Psa. 127:3). Therefore as a gift, it is the father's duty to raise up his children in the way of the Lord so that they live a disciplined life (1 Tim. 3:4) which is characterized by a personal relationship with Christ and not by excessive living and rebellion (Titus 1:6). This training must begin when the children are very young. Proverbs 22:6 instructs parents to "train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it." The word "train" speaks of a process of instruction which, in the context of this verse, starts at the very beginning of the child's life. The word "way" is the path on which God desires His child to travel. There are two main paths spoken of in the Bible upon which a person may go: the way of righteousness (Pro. 1:15,19; 2:12-15; cf. Mat. 7:14), and the way of unrighteousness (Pro. 2:8,20; 3:6,23; cf. Mat. 7:13). The implication in this verse is that the person hearing Solomon's words will want his child to travel the path of righteousness. Therefore if you train your children from the beginning in the path of righteousness, when they are old, they will not depart from it. Although this is not always the case, it is generally the outcome of such training.

What should one's training consist of if he desires to raise godly children? The pastor must be an example, not only to his flock, but to his children as well (cf. Titus 2:7; 1 Pet. 5:3). In being an example, he must first love God and then his wife. As he models this love for them, his children will feel secure and stable and will imitate what they see and hear. If either of these relationships are not right, his relationship and training of his children will eventually suffer. He must also be careful that he does not provoke them to anger (Eph. 6:4) or exasperate them so that they lose heart (Col. 3:21). The pastor, along with his wife, are not to rear their children in such a way that they arouse either anger or discouragement in them.

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[12] The only exceptions to this are in the cases of adultery (Mat. 5:31-32; 19:9) or abandonment by an unbelieving spouse (1 Cor. 7:15).

This can be done in many different ways so the pastor needs to monitor the results of how he and his wife interact with each other and their children, as well as how they instruct and discipline them. They need to ask the question: "Do our methods of child rearing, our rules, and/or our family life provoke anger in our children and/or discourage them, or do these things encourage them in the things of God?" (Eph. 6:4).

Another important aspect of child rearing is discipline. The word discipline means to instruct; to train. When a child is disciplined, the person administering the discipline is training or discipling the child. This is the ultimate goal of discipline. Since this is the case, discipline should never be done out of or during a time of anger. It is to be done in love. When a child knows that the one disciplining him loves him and is discipling him for his own good, the discipline will be accepted much more readily than when it is done out of anger. A godly, loving pastor will discipline his children, for Proverbs 13:24 states: "He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently." If children are not disciplined, they will remain foolish (Pro. 22:15) and not mature; not having been discipled through discipline. In some cases, the result of a lack of discipline could be the death of the child (Pro. 23:13-14) due to his lack of wisdom; for the child who does not obey his parents may see fewer days of life (Exo. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-3). Therefore, "the rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother. Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; he will also delight your soul" (Pro. 29:15,17). Furthermore, "discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death" (Pro. 19:18). As the head of your home, it is your responsibility to teach your children the things of God (cf. Deut. 4:9-10; 6:4-7,20-25; 11:18-19; Psa. 78:1-8; Eph. 6:4). You should have family devotions with them, pray with them, teach and correct them. Your children are your closest disciples. If you don't teach them, be assured that someone else will; but the question is, "Who will be teaching them and what will they be learning?"

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. How is your relationship with the Lord? Are you seeking Him fervently on a daily basis? Is Jesus your first love? If things are not going well in this relationship, do you know why? What can you do to correct this relationship? Who can you talk with to assist you in this area of your life?

2. Do you see your wife and children as your first and most important ministry? If not, why? Please explain using Scripture to state your case.

3. How is your relationship with your wife? Are you getting along well? Are you each other's best friend? If things are not going well in this relationship, do you know why? What aspect of the problem might be your responsibility? What can you do to correct this?

4. What kind of things can you do in order to build a stronger relationship with your wife?

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5. Are there areas of your life which you know your wife wants you to change? Are there areas of your life which you know you need to change? If so, what are they? What is your plan to correct these things? Do you know of a book or a person who could help you make these changes? Could your wife help you make these changes?

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6. Do you treat your wife as you would like her to treat you (Mat. 7:12)? Do you nourish and cherish her as Christ does the church (Eph. 5:29)?

7. When was the last time you bought your wife flowers or took her out on a date? When was the last time you told her you loved her or washed the dishes for her? Will you do something like this soon?

8. What are you doing to protect your relationship with your wife?

9. Do you find yourself attracted to women other than your wife? What are you doing to combat these desires? Do you have someone with whom you could talk about overcoming these desires before you succumb to them? Have you confessed this to the Lord? Have you talked to your wife about this? What is your plan of action to deal with this temptation?

10. How is your relationship with your children? Are you getting along well with them? Do they respect you? If things are not going well in these relationships, do you know why? What aspect of the problem might be your responsibility? What can you do to correct this?

11. Do you take time to talk with your children? Do you show interest in their lives? Do you do things with them which they like to do? How much of your time and attention do you give to them on a daily basis? Please record your thoughts below.

12. Do you know who your children's friends are and what kind of children they are? Do you know their parents and what kind of families they come from? Do your children and their friends positively influence one another, or do changes need to be made? If you have concerns, are you able to talk to the parents of your children's friends about your concerns? Please record your thoughts below.

13. Do you provoke your children to anger (Eph. 6:4) or exasperate them so that they lose heart (Col. 3:21)? If so, what will you do to change this behavior?

14. What special event can you plan with your children that you as a family can do together? What special thing can you do with or for each of your children so that they feel special and loved?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. As you look at beginning your church plant, do you believe that your family relationships are strong and growing, or are they weak and need to be strengthened? Remember as you step out into a new ministry, Satan will attack you where you are weakest. He will attack your family whether it is weak or not. For those of you who are going to minister in another culture, your adjustment will be more difficult, and the stress upon your family will be much greater. You need to be prepared for what lies ahead. Below rate yourself on a scale of zero to ten -- zero being no relationship exists and ten being your relationship is as strong as it can possibly be.

   - How is your relationship with God?
   - How is your relationship with your wife?
   - How is your relationship with your children?
     - Child's name:
     - Child's name:
     - Child's name:
       Child's name:

   - Are there any issues between you and your wife which you need to resolve? If so, what issues? Do you need to ask for her forgiveness? Do you need to forgive her for something? Does she need to ask you for your forgiveness?

   - Are there any issues between you and your children which you need to resolve? If so, what issues? Do you need to ask any or all of them for their forgiveness? Do any of them need to make things right with you?

- Child's name:
- Child's name:
- Child's name:
- Child's name:

- Are there any issues which need to be resolved between your wife and any of your children, or between the children themselves?
  - Your wife:
  - Child's name:
  - Child's name:
  - Child's name:
  - Child's name:
- Is there an issue in your family which you and your family need to discuss with someone, possibly with a pastor or godly, trusted individual? If so, what is the issue that you need to resolve? Who do you think would be a good person to help you with this? When will you take care of this matter?

2. Can you foresee any potential problems which may develop in the future as a result of stress in your life or in the lives of your wife and children due to your new ministry? If so, what might they be? How will you begin to deal with them now?
   - You:
   - Your wife:
   - Child's name:
   - Child's name:
   - Child's name:
   - Child's name:

3 If you are a missionary, have you read anything on or been taught anything about culture shock and the culture shock cycle? Do you believe that you and your family are prepared to enter a different culture, learn a new language, different customs, etc.? If not, how will you prepare yourself and your family for this?

4 What kinds of things could you do as a family to maintain or even strengthen your relationships, especially during times of extreme stress? Defining these things now may help you when stress and spiritual attack overwhelm you. Discuss this with your wife and list your ideas below.

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THE PASTOR:

Pastor's Needs

The work of the pastor:

The pastor-teacher, the church's leading elder, is a man who has a very rewarding yet very difficult job to fulfill. In many churches the pastor has so many different responsibilities that he may not even understand what his main job really is at times. Not only do the members of his church expect him to be available for them 24 hours a day if a problem arises, but at times he may find himself being the church janitor, plumber, carpenter, doctor, chauffeur, delivery boy, counselor, treasurer, baby-sitter, etc., etc., etc. He is expected to have the wisdom of Solomon, the strength of Samson, the humility of Moses, the patience of Job, the skills of Noah, the heart of David, the knowledge of Paul, as well as the abilities of Jesus to do the miraculous. He is to be everything that everyone in the congregation wants him to be. On top of this, he usually has a family to care for and a job which he needs to support his family. Though it is impossible to find such a man -- one who is able to meet all the desires of his church members -- nonetheless this is often what the church expects. Not only that, they usually expect him to do it for little or no pay.

The pastor's needs:

One reason the pastor's job can be difficult is because the church fails to pay him an adequate salary; that is if they pay him one at all. This makes his life difficult, having to live modestly and always struggling to provide for his family and pay his bills. A church which treats its pastor poorly is not taking into account the importance of his role within the church of Jesus Christ. It is also not mindful that one day they will have to answer to Jesus for why they did not treat him better. Poor support (prayer or financial) on their part shows a lack of respect for him and his position as their pastor. Furthermore, such attitudes do not reflect the Scriptures and what they teach on this topic. In 1 Corinthians 9:1-14, the Apostle Paul made it clear that "the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel" (vs. 14). In these verses, Paul showed the Corinthians that they should have supported him and Barnabas (and their families if they had them), so they did not have to work outside the church (cf. vss. 5-6). They should have been able to reap

material things as a result of having sown spiritual things in the lives of the Corinthian believers (vss. 4,7,10-11). But instead of doing the right thing, the Corinthians were muzzling the ox (cf. vs. 9). Along these lines, Paul told Timothy: "The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,' and 'The laborer is worthy of his wages.'" (1 Tim. 5:17-18). Those elders who "rule well" and work hard at teaching and preaching are to receive "double honor;" in other words, receive greater pay for their service than those who do just the minimum required. Why? Because "the laborer is worthy of his wages." The pastor should be paid for his work; and if he is paid, this will enable him to devote more time and energy to the work of the Lord, accomplishing much more. The members of the church who do not give their money, possessions or time to support the work of the Lord (i.e., giving for their pastor's salary and to help pay the bills, support missions, etc.), show where their hearts lie in relationship to their faith and to their God (cf. 2 Cor. 9:12-14).

Another need of a pastor is time alone with his family. Sometimes church members expect their pastors to be available for them every time there is the slightest problem. They forget that their pastor needs time alone to rest and be with his family. This is of utmost importance. This relationship needs to be protected by the church so that their pastor and his family do not suffer from his constant service to others. The pastor needs to set time aside when the church members should not contact him, except in times of extreme emergency. The pastor should notify his church of these times and why they are important so the members will understand his need and learn to respect this time.

It is also essential that the pastor be prayed for by the members of his church. The pastor and his family are under great spiritual attack. Satan desires to destroy them (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8-9), therefore it is important that they be held up in prayer on a regular basis. The pastor needs to be open and willing to share his needs regularly with the congregation so they can effectively pray for him and his family. Some needs should be shared with other pastors rather than with his congregation. This is why the pastor should attend a pastors' fellowship which meets on a regular basis for the purpose of prayer and encouragement. This type of fellowship is recommended for the pastor's wife as well.

A final need of the pastor is addressed in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13: "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work." The pastor, as well as the other elders who work diligently in the church, is to be appreciated and esteemed very highly in love because of his work. The pastor is to be treated well and respected. Paying him an adequate salary for his work will reflect in part the application of these instructions of Paul. Please note that those who receive such honor are those who deserve it because of their diligent work (1 Tim. 5:17-18; 1 Thes. 5:12).

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. As a pastor, are you sharing your responsibilities of the ministry with your elders, or do you feel that you are to be in charge and do everything yourself? If you are not sharing your responsibilities, why not? How will you change this?

2. Are you receiving any kind of regular salary from your church? If so, is it sufficient to meet your needs? If you are receiving a salary which is not sufficient, or you are not receiving a salary at all, what can be done to change this? List some ideas below.

3. Have you or any of your elders ever preached a message on 1 Corinthians 9:1-14? Do the members of your church understand their responsibility to you?

4. Are you and your wife a part of a pastors' fellowship where you can be involved in prayer and fellowship with others in your position of ministry? If not, is there a way for you to join or start such a group?

5. Do the members of your church pray for you and your family on a regular basis? If not, how will you help them participate in this vital ministry for you?

6. Do the people of your church respect and love you as their pastor, as well as the other elders of the church? Do they respect your time alone with your family? If not, do you know why? How can this be changed?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. How well do you share authority with others? Will it be easy for you to share your authority with others in the church? If it is hard for you to do this, how can you become a person who does not have to be in charge of everything and able to share responsibility?

2. When will you start to receive a salary from your church? How will you determine when this should begin? How will you determine how much you should accept? How will you prepare the people of the church to understand that paying you a salary is biblical and anticipated?

3. How will you protect the time that you need alone with your family? What will you do to make sure that you do not burn out because of overwork and the demands of others?

4. Encourage your church to pray for you and your family. How will you communicate this vital need to the members of your church?

5. How can you develop a love and respect for your church's leaders by the members of your church?

THE PASTOR:

Pastor's Wife

Her call:

The wife of a pastor, like her husband, has a very special role within the church. Whereas her husband is called to minister to the many of the church, it is her job to minister to him. In this special role she is his confidant, encourager, helpmate, adviser, comforter and lover. This is a role which no one else is able to fulfill but her, and her alone, for she is the pastor's wife.

Though a pastor is called by God to his position, his wife many times may not sense a special call of God on her life to this new role. She simply knows that if her husband is called to be the pastor, then because she is his wife, she is called of God to be a pastor's wife. For some women this is a logical reality which they can easily accept, whereas for others it may not be so logical or acceptable. For those in the latter category, being a pastor's wife can be a more difficult position for them. Therefore if a pastor is sure of his call, he needs to be understanding and willing to help his wife accept her new ministry. Why? Because the pastor's wife can be his greatest ally and help in ministry, as well as a great help and benefit to the church. If however she does not feel a part of her husband's ministry or a sense of ownership to what she and her husband are doing in the church, then she may struggle, become depressed and discouraged, thereby hindering his ministry. A pastor needs to understand how important his wife is to his role in the church. He also needs to realize that they should function together as a team; and that without her at his side, he and his ministry may not be as effective as possible. Therefore, pastor must care for and be sensitive to his wife and her needs.

What is her function?

The function of a pastor's wife, first and foremost, is to minister to her husband. She needs to be there as his helpmate and encourager. When she supports him at home, it makes his job easier within the church. Her next most important ministry is to her children. If the children are neglected, sooner or later they will negatively impact his ministry. The children are not only the responsibility of the pastor's wife, but of the pastor as well. Their children are important, and both the

pastor and his wife are to give them the appropriate time necessary for their training and development (see the article titled, "Pastor's Family").

Along with her ministry to her family, the pastor's wife can focus some of her attention on ministry within the church. This does not mean that she becomes her husband's personal secretary (unless she desires this) or the person who does everything no one else in the church wants to do. She, like other believers, is gifted by the Holy Spirit, having received from God various talents and abilities which she is to use in the body of Christ. She, her gifts, as well as her desire for ministry, should be respected and taken into account.

Her value:

A pastor needs to understand that although his wife can be his greatest asset in his ministry, she can also be his biggest liability. Whether she is an asset or a liability may very well be the result of his relationship with her, although this is not always the case. This is why his relationship with her is to be God-honoring, loving her as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25-30). God did not give her to him to hinder him, but instead to be a tool of God to sharpen him, just as he is used of God to sharpen her (cf. Pro. 27:17). She is to come alongside him as his partner to complete him (cf. Gen. 2:18,24; Mark 10:8), as he is to complete her. He needs to remember, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD" (Pro. 18:22). He is to treat her appropriately, for she is a gift from God through whom God has blessed him. "You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered" (1 Pet. 3:7).

A pastor ought to be concerned about his wife's spiritual life (cf. Eph. 5:25-27), making sure it is growing and active. He is not to neglect her for the sake of others as so many pastors have a tendency to do. His wife is not just another member in his church. She is a person who is to be treasured by him, one with whom he has a very special and intimate relationship (cf. Gen. 2:24; Pro. 5:19), a relationship which he is to have with no other as long as both of them are alive (cf. 1 Cor. 7:39; Heb. 13:4). Therefore this relationship is to be of utmost importance in his life and is to be guarded (cf. Mal. 2:13-16; Eph. 5:25-29).

Other thoughts:

In his relationship with his wife, a pastor should not discuss all the problems related to the church with her. At times this may be too much for her to deal with. Hearing certain things might cause her to become bitter toward the church and some of the people in it. When he does discuss church issues with her, he needs to be careful what he tells her. She does not need to know about all the counseling sessions he has and what things were discussed in them. These should be kept confidential. This does not mean, however, that at times her counsel and perspective as a woman should not be sought. Some pastors counsel with their wives at their sides, especially when counseling women and/or couples. This is up to the discretion of the pastor and his wife and can also be a safeguard for the

pastor. Many times discussing counseling issues with someone other than his wife is prudent, such as with qualified elders. With such men, the pastor is able to discuss confidential issues and work through problems together. If within the church such elders have not yet been developed, the pastor should have a trusted and wise friend (maybe another pastor) outside of the church who does not know the people in his church; a person whom he can talk to and receive counsel from. The pastor is to protect his wife and children from all the problems and politics of the church. It may be better for her well being and that of his family.

A pastor also should remember not to use his wife (or his children) as sermon illustrations unless he gets their permission first. If he ever talks about his wife (or his children) in public, it is to be in a positive, loving manner, elevating and honoring her. How he treats his wife may impact how the men in the church will treat their wives as well (cf. 1 Cor. 5:6; 2 Thes. 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7; 1 Pet. 5:3).

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Pastor, how do you view your wife -- as a help or hindrance to your ministry? If you view her as a hindrance, why? How can this be changed?

2. Does your wife feel that she is an important part of your ministry? If not, why not?

3. Does your wife feel that she has her own ministry within the church, or does she do only the things which no one else wants to do?

4. Do you value your wife's input or do you have the attitude that you do not need her help in the ministry? If you feel that you do not need her help and input, please explain why God gave her to you as a wife and a helpmate. Keep in mind 1 Corinthians 12:18-25.

5. If your relationship with your wife is not what it should be, how can you improve it? Is there someone the two of you can talk with to get help? If help is needed, when will you seek it and whom will you talk to?

6. Are there ways in which you can involve your wife more in your ministry? Are there situations in which it would be beneficial for you to seek her advice? List some of your ideas below.

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7. Do you share information with your wife from board meetings, other meetings or counseling sessions? Are you careful about what you share with her?

8. How is your wife's spiritual life? If it is not where it should be, do you know why? How can you encourage her to grow in her relationship with Christ?

9. Does your wife feel valued by you? How do you treat her in front of the people of your church, with honor or with dishonor? How do you treat her at home? Are there changes which you need to make?

10. What can you do this week to make your wife feel special and loved? After doing this, discuss with her how she feels about her role as the pastor's wife and her ministry within the church. Discover how she thinks her role and ministry can be improved and what can be done to make her feel an important part of your team. Then make the necessary changes.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. Is your wife a part of your team? In other words, is she convinced of your calling and is she willing not only to follow you in this endeavor, but to assist you as she is able?

2. How does your wife see her role in your future ministry? Is she excited about the possibilities?

3. Has your wife always been an asset to you in your ministry or has she hindered you? If you feel she has hindered you, what has been the main underlying reason for this? Could her hindrance be God-sent -- that God was using her to slow you down or change your course? Or, is there a problem between the two of you which needs to be corrected? Could there possibly be another reason?

4. What can you do to honor your wife to help her feel loved, cherished, and a valuable part of your team?

THE PASTOR:

Pastor to Pastor

In this section, my goal is to share some insights which I learned over the years while I was a pastor. Some things I discovered myself and others I have read about or heard. The insights listed below are for your consideration, and I hope that you will find them helpful in your ministry. If a statement is not mine, and I know its source, I will credit the source. If I do not know the source, next to it I have stated "unknown." If it is something which I personally discovered while in ministry, then nothing will be noted.

Areas of Responsibility:

Dr. Gene Getz stated that a pastor has three main areas of responsibility. They are:

1. Preaching/teaching
2. Administration
3. Shepherding

He said that he has never met a pastor who could do all three well; they usually can only do two of them well (Dr. Gene Getz, pastor, professor and author).

I have found this to be true. Generally if a pastor is capable in two of these three areas, he will lack in the third. The best scenario is a pastor who lacks in the area of administration. He likely can find someone with administrative skills who can help him or completely take over this area of responsibility for him. Such a person can administer the church under his guidance and direction. If a pastor is weak in the area of shepherding, then it is to his advantage to have other people (such as the church elders) assist him in visitation, counseling, etc. If a pastor is weak in the area of preaching and teaching, this could hinder his ministry considerably. If this is the case, it is possible that he is not working hard enough at this aspect of his ministry (cf. 1 Tim. 5:17), or he is not called of God to be a pastor (1 Tim. 3:2, "able to teach"). The ability to teach is an important aspect of a pastor's ministry (Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 4:11,13; 2 Tim. 4:2). I have heard of situations where the pastor was not

a good teacher, but because of his love for his people, he was loved and accepted by them.

My suggestion is that in whichever area you are weak, especially in the area of preaching and teaching, find someone who is skilled in that area and ask him to help you develop skills and/or assist you in this capacity. You could also read a book on the topic as well as take a class on homiletics if one is available.

Board Meetings:

Board meetings on a monthly basis are generally sufficient for the average church. The only time board meetings need to take place more than once a month is when the church is in the midst of a crisis. Too many board meetings can cause extra stress and strain, which is unnecessary for the pastor and board members. There are generally three reasons, other than a crisis situation, why they might meet more than once a month. First, when the church is being poorly administered these meetings may be necessary. The second reason may be when the pastor or board likes tight control over everything which goes on in the church, so they meet often to maintain this control. This is not a good situation. Third, the board members just like getting together for fellowship. This can be fine if it does not take away time from their families' needs.

Character:

- A pastor needs to be reliable, trustworthy and punctual. He should be a person whom other people can trust and look up to. If he does not, then his ministry will not make a great impact for Christ.

- A pastor must be one who does not have a fear of man (cf. Pro. 29:25). A pastor who does is worthless in his position for he will respond to the wishes and desires of men rather than God. But a pastor who fears God and not man, will be blessed in all that he does (Psa. 25:12; 112:1; 118:6; 128:4).

Church Finances:

A pastor should never be involved in the handling of the church finances. Although one man should be in change of this area, the elders as a whole should oversee this aspect of the ministry along with the pastor (cf. 2 Cor 8:16-23). They are to give an accounting of the money received and how it was utilized. If there is ever a problem where church money is mishandled, then no one will be able to accuse the pastor. This will help maintain his integrity and the integrity of his ministry. This can also help a pastor avoid the temptation to use church money for personal needs and desires.

Church Organization:

- God never meant the pastor to be the church's only leader. Although he is the senior leader, he is to be one of a number of elders. This is important for a pastor to understand because this gives him the opportunity to share the responsibilities of the church with other godly men (his elders); men who will pray for and with him, assist him, and help him to carry the burden of the church. This system of leadership alleviates stress and the overworking of the pastor. A pastor should share his responsibilities and burdens with the other elders of his church.

- Gene Getz stated that the church consists of families which he calls churches in miniature (Dr. Gene Getz, pastor, professor and author). If the small churches (families) are not strong and healthy, then the main church will not be strong and healthy either. This is why it is important for the church as a whole to work at building strong and healthy families.

House Calls:

Though a pastor is a servant of the church, he does not have to drop everything whenever the phone rings and someone in the church wants something. A pastor needs to weigh each situation and determine how, when, and if he will respond. Even though the caller may think that his world is falling apart, this does not mean that the pastor has to race to his side. The best thing might be for the pastor to talk with the person for a little while and set up an appointment for a later time. It may also happen that if the pastor does not deal with the situation immediately, that over time it will simply be resolved without his intervention. A pastor may also send someone else who is capable of helping the caller.

This issue is also important for a pastor to keep in mind in regards to his family. His family is his primary ministry. If his family falls apart, then he will no longer have a ministry (1 Tim. 3;4-5; Titus 1:6). He needs to carefully consider whether the problem the caller has is more important than what he is doing or will shortly do with his family. Many pastors schedule times when people can call or visit them to deal with personal issues. Only in a crisis situation should these calls take precedence.

Membership Meetings:

It is important to gather the membership of the church together annually to discuss the church's ministries, finances, goals, and other issues. This should be done at the end of each year. At this time the members may be given the opportunity to vote on deacons and deaconesses whom the elders may recommend for serving in the church. A church may also want to have at least two other meetings during the year to keep the members informed of church business. Generally these meetings should be informational and for input, but not for the purpose of making final decisions. That is the job of the church board. The only time more meetings may be necessary is when the church is experiencing difficulties.

Office Hours:

It is good for a pastor to set up times during the week when people can call and make appointments to see him. This is important so that he will not be constantly interrupted when he is preparing sermons or Bible studies. Doing this will give him undisturbed quality time alone with the Lord, which in the end will greatly benefit the church. It is helpful for a pastor to state these times, letting the people of the church know why he is doing this and that these are the best times they can contact him (except in the case of an emergency).

Pastor's Job:

- A pastor's job is to cause pain; just enough pain so that it causes a person to grow, but not so much pain that he recoils (unknown). This was an interesting statement to me and a truthful one. A pastor's job is to help his people leave the comfort zones they have built around themselves and are accustomed to. If they stay in them, they will not grow in their faith; for in their striving to remain comfortable, important uncomfortable things such as ministry will suffer, not getting accomplished. A pastor is to find ways to gently move them from where they are to a more uncomfortable position so they can grow. However he is not to cause so much discomfort that they shrink back from being involved in ministry in the future.

- A pastor's job is to do what the people of the congregation are incapable of doing (unknown). This is also true. If a member of your church can do something, even if they cannot do it as well as you can, you should allow them to do it in order to develop as a person in their service for Christ. The only time this would not be a good idea is when something is critical and of utmost importance. Then it is best done by you or by someone else who is skilled at that task. As a pastor, you do not need to be involved in every aspect of every ministry. God has gifted the members of your church with spiritual gifts as well (1 Cor. 12:7,11). If you do everything, then you will rob them of the opportunity and joy of serving God. You will have enough other responsibilities to carry out that others may not be qualified or gifted to do. In addition, it is your job to equip the saints in the body of Christ to enable them to do the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11-13). Therefore learn to trust people with responsibility, even though this may be hard for you to do.

- The average pastor can minister effectively to 80 or 90 people. If he has to minister to more than this, he will not be able to do the job well, and people in the church will eventually suffer (Unknown). He only has enough time, ability and energy to expend to meet the needs of a limited number of people. When he has to meet the needs of more people than he is capable of ministering to, more than likely he will suffer, the church will suffer, and his family will suffer. Therefore when a church gets larger than the number of people one pastor can effectively minister to, he needs to be sharing his responsibilities with his elders. Or the church should consider adding another pastor to its staff.

- A pastor is not to assume the place of God. He is not to go beyond the boundaries of the Scriptures and force people to live according to his standards and desires. God never meant for a pastor to be a dictator. It is not his job to control the lives of the people in his church as if he were the Holy Spirit. For example, it is not his place to tell a husband and wife how many children they are to have; if, how, and when they can have sexual relations. It is not his responsibility to attempt to control every aspect of the lives of the members of his church, putting them under bondage as the scribes and Pharisees did (Mat. 23). A pastor's job is to teach what the Bible teaches, to shepherd, and to make sure that any church members in major sin are disciplined (see the chapter titled, "Church Discipline"). For these responsibilities he will one day give an account (Heb. 13:17), but he will not be held accountable for the thoughts or actions of his church members. That is their responsibility, and they will give an accounting to Jesus, not the pastor.

- A pastor's main job is to love his people. A pastor's love for his people is foundational to his ministry. If a pastor does not love his people, then he will not shepherd them with love. Instead he may drive them and treat them like a herd of cattle. He may use and abuse them, or he may simply neglect them. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep (John 10:11) and who knows them (John 10:14). This is the attitude a pastor is to have for his sheep: "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of* God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:2-3). A pastor who loves his sheep will be loved in return and followed by his sheep.

- A church generally will take on the personality of its pastor, because he sets an example of what a Christian is by how he acts and lives. His relationship with his congregation is like that of a parent with his children. Because this is true, a pastor needs to be careful of the example he sets, just as a father does with his children. He has to answer the question: "Do I want to reproduce disciples who resemble me and manifest my character?" The Apostle Paul openly stated that he set the example for the believers in the churches which he started (2 Thes. 3:7,9; 1 Tim. 1:16), stating to the Philippians: "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us" (Php. 3:17). Paul also told Timothy (1 Tim. 4:12) and Titus (Titus 2:7) to be examples to fellow believers. Pastors need to realize that they are in an influential position in which they are a living standard for their flock to observe. They are a role model. Therefore they need to consider what kind of a role model they are.

Personal Planner:

Pastors need to plan their work and work their plan. A pastor should not allow his life to be controlled by the demands of life or the whims of others. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he should determine what he needs to accomplish each day and/or week and lay out a prayerful plan with the goal of getting these things accomplished. He should also lay out a yearly plan for the church, possibly having a large one-year-at-a-glance calendar hanging on his office wall where he can write in

all of the important events of the year. It is also beneficial to carry a small yearly calendar or pocket PC in order to schedule appointments, events, etc., to help organize and remember his schedule. This will make his life and that of others more orderly and less stressful.

Preaching Schedule:

A pastor is the church's teaching elder (Eph. 4:11) who is responsible for the preaching/teaching ministry of his church. As the teaching elder, he should be the one who preaches the majority of sermons throughout the year because God has gifted and called him for this work. When he takes this responsibility seriously, he is then able to plan months in advance what books of the Bible he feels led to preach and teach. Therefore, he is able to develop a strategic plan for the growth and needs of his church with specific goals and then execute them. Too often giving this responsibility to others takes away from the potency and continuity of the pastor's ministry.

Women:

A pastor needs to be careful in his relationships with women. He needs to keep a safe emotional distance from them. He should never allow a woman in his church to become dependent upon him, no matter how needed and good this makes him feel. It is only a recipe for disaster. This can occur when the relationship between a pastor and his secretary or a woman he is counseling, etc., becomes too close. They can become attracted to one another and possibly fall into sin. Another scenario which can occur is when a woman publicly accuses the pastor of a relationship with her, even though this has not happened. This may result from an emotional bond with him. She may do this with the goal of destroying his marriage, possibly hoping to begin a relationship with him if his wife leaves him. She may also do this out of bitterness or revenge, wanting to destroy his ministry if she is not receiving from him the attention she desires (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8-9). There are many reasons why a pastor needs to be careful of such relationships. Therefore a pastor needs to build a barrier around himself to protect himself, his family and the integrity of his ministry. Many pastors have had to leave the ministry because of similar situations (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27).

CHURCH LEADER'S PERSONAL GROWTH:

Personal Devotions

Importance of time alone with God:

Time spent alone with God each day is of vital importance to the spiritual life of a church leader. It is during this daily time of interaction with God, as one reads His Word and prays, that God communicates with His child in a personal, specific manner. What a privilege it is to spend time alone with God! Such time is essential and needs to be protected from the things of this world which try to crowd in and rob a person of this necessary communion with his God.

As one spends time alone with God, seeking Him and getting to know Him better, he has an opportunity to develop an intimate relationship with the Creator of the universe. It is through this time of daily fellowship that an Omniscient, Omnipresent, Omnipotent, and Perfect Heavenly Father can encourage (Rom. 15:5), build up (cf. 2 Cor. 13:10), direct (Pro. 16:9), and give wisdom and understanding (Jam. 1:5) to His child who longs for Him (cf. Psa. 145:18; Jer. 33:3). It is also during this time that God's child can seek forgiveness and restoration (1 John 1:9; cf. Psa. 51), thank (cf. Psa. 30:12; 106:47) and praise Him (cf. Psa. 47:6; 150:1) and be empowered in his faith (cf. 1 Cor. 2:5). God told the prophet Jeremiah: "Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jer. 33:3). Though this invitation was made to Jeremiah, God tells His children to ask Him for wisdom which He will abundantly supply (Jam. 1:5). In a believer's personal devotions, such intercourse is possible and can occur on a daily, even minute-by-minute basis. Such truth should be heartening to church leaders, knowing that no matter what they face, such a wise and caring God is enclosing them behind and before with His hand upon them (Psa. 139:5). This means that they are not alone as they face situations that tax their very faith and being as they minister to others and encounter the attacks of the evil one. Who better to have on one's side? No one. This is why it is so important for church leaders to guard this time alone. They should not allow anything to get in the way of keeping this daily appointment with their Father. Allowing other things to interfere with or take the place of this time with God is foolishness. Doing so can be compared to a pilot flying a plane which is low on fuel, has no form of radio communication, no radar nor navigation equipment, and who is trying to navigate by his own skills and senses.

Although this can be accomplished, it is dangerous and unwise compared to a pilot who has a continual supply of fuel, has the assistance of instruments, and people in the airport control tower helping and directing him. So it is with the church leader -- he can operate in his own strength and in his own wisdom, or he can experience and benefit from the guiding, helping hand of God as He empowers him in his work.

Danger of routine:

One danger a church leader may face in his devotional time is allowing it to become a habit or ritual. When this happens, his daily devotions become something he does, not for the purpose of drawing closer to God, but because he feels he has to do this for some underlying, often erroneous reason. These devotional times become dry and commonplace, and as a result bear no fruit. This might be one reason why some church leaders are not diligent in maintaining their devotional times. Why is this the case? Generally after a believer's salvation, he has a great desire to know and understand God and the Bible. As a result of this craving, he asks questions, reads his Bible, goes to church and Sunday School, learns to pray and to share his faith. It is this desire that fuels all he does. It is also this desire which empowers his devotional time with God. It is what makes this time special and alive. But later this desire may wane, which makes one's devotional time unmeaningful, unproductive and stale. Therefore if a believer is no longer experiencing a relationship with God or seeing the fruit he desires resulting from his devotional life, then he must renew the craving he once had as a new believer.

Restoring one's passion for God:

How can a believer restore this passion? He needs to follow the example of King David after being confronted by Nathan the prophet about his sin with Bathsheba. Immediately following this confrontation, David prayed: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. *Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You" (Psa. 51:10,12-13). David asked God to do four things in his life: 1) create in him a clean heart; 2) renew a steadfast spirit within him; 3) restore to him the joy of God's salvation; and 4) sustain him with a willing spirit. These four facets are what a believer needs to have occur in his life if he desires to have a vibrant, living, and intimate relationship with God. A believer also needs to deal with sin in his life as David did, sin which may have crept in unnoticed. David desired to experience once again viable fruit in his life after having these four aspects of his faith renewed -- seeing those who had strayed from the faith restored, as well as seeing the conversion of the lost. At times church leaders lack these aspects of their faith. This is why they may operate in the flesh at times and not in the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:16). These are what they need to ask God to restore afresh in their lives as David did so that they too can have a fruitful ministry and intimacy with God once again. Jesus told the church of Ephesus which He commended for doing many good things: "But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place -- unless you repent" (Rev. 2:4-5). God did not need to

use this church if Christ was not loved by it just as He does not need to use church leaders who do not love Christ as they should. He must be first in their lives.

Planning your devotional time:

How one conducts his devotional time is personal and will vary from person to person. However, the goal of this time needs to be kept in mind, that of glorifying God (1 Cor. 10:31) and drawing closer to Him. To achieve this, besides reading the Bible and praying, some may do such things as sing a hymn or two and/or listen to Christian music. They may record their thoughts in a journal about what they read in the Bible and/or specific answers to prayer. They may also memorize Scripture or integrate other significant, spiritually-enriching practices into this time to make it more meaningful. Also when reading their Bible, they may make notes in the margins, underline or highlight words, phrases or passages, and/or cross-reference passages. They may even have a commentary or devotional on hand for the purpose of quickly looking at another person's understanding or application of the text they are reading. Remember, the objective of a personal devotional time is not to study the Bible, but to hear from God. Therefore it is recommended that the use of commentaries should be kept to a minimum and study time should be separate from devotional time.

If church leaders desire to grow in their faith and know their Heavenly Father better, daily devotions are a necessity in this process. Meeting daily with God in this way also sets an example for the flock over which they are responsible. If they are not consistent in this area of their life, how can they expect the members of their church to be consistent and draw closer to God? They can't.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERS, CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. Do you schedule time alone with God each day to read his Word and pray? Are you consistent in meeting with Him daily?

2. Are your devotional times with God profitable, or do they lack fulfillment? If these times are not profitable, how do you think you can change this? Would it be helpful to have them at a different time and/or in a different place? As in the case of King David, does repentance need to take place?

3. What could you add to your devotional time to make it more meaningful, encouraging and enriching? Would listening to music be beneficial? Would singing a hymn or memorizing Scripture be beneficial?

4. When God shows you something special in your devotional time, do you record this insight in your Bible or in a journal? Do you share this with others to encourage them?

5. What is the greatest benefit you derive from your devotional time?

6. Your devotional time is not only time that you spend with God, it is also time He spends with you. Therefore, how important do you think this time is for Him? Do you think He looks forward to this daily time with you? As you ponder this thought, think about it from the perspective of a loving, caring Father Who desires to spend time with His precious child. Record your thoughts below.

CHURCH LEADER'S PERSONAL GROWTH:

Spiritual Disciplines

The importance of spiritual disciplines:

Spiritual disciplines are an important aspect of every believer's life, but especially of the pastor/elder. They are important because they help him live a more consistent, disciplined, and fruitful Christian life on a day-to-day basis. This is key because believers are to live out their faith in accordance with the Scriptures, walking in a manner which is worthy of their calling (Eph. 4:1; Php. 1:27; Col. 1:10; 1 Thes. 2:12). Doing this will produce a believer whose life inside the church is the same as his life outside the church; he is not a hypocrite. Strong church leaders and strong churches are those who practice these disciplines.

Although the list may vary on what spiritual disciplines should consist of, the following will be discussed in this article:

1. Daily devotions and prayer
2. Scripture memorization
3. Bible study
4. Special time alone with God
5. Fasting
6. Evangelism
7. Service
8. Stewardship
9. Giving
10. Journaling

Daily devotions:

It is important for a believer to start each day fellowshipping with his Heavenly Father. This is a time set aside each morning for Bible reading and prayer. It is devoted to God for the purpose of communion with Him, to speak to Him (cf. Psa. 62:8) and to hear from Him as one reads His Word and prays. This is when a believer sets his focus on God and prepares himself for the day which lies ahead.

A believer's personal, daily devotions will not only help him better understand the Word of God, but God Himself. Through His Word, God reveals Himself, His Son, His Holy Spirit, and His will for man. It is also through His Word that God speaks to His children, as His Holy Spirit uses the Scriptures to communicate to

them the things which He desires them to know; "for the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12; cf. Psa. 119:130). During this time God uses His Word to impact the believer's personal life as the Creator, the King of the universe, communes with His child and speaks to him.

As a pastor/elder reads the Scriptures and God enlightens his mind to new things in His Word, he can share these insights with his congregation. If he makes it his habit to read through the Bible yearly, this will help him as a teacher to know the whole of God's Word. Not only will this give him the opportunity to see afresh all that God's Word says from year to year; but the more he reads the Bible in its entirety, the more he will see how everything in the Bible harmonizes. His understanding of the Scriptures will increase as will his ability to see it as a whole, complete unit. This will also help him correlate the whole of Scripture and not become skewed in his view of what the Word of God teaches. This complete picture will help him better understand the God of the Old Testament and His Son in the New Testament, who is the exact representation of the Father (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3); the One who explains Him (John 1:18). These and other benefits gained will be extremely helpful to the pastor/elder, his family and his church.

Other benefits to reading the Bible daily are because it: is a believer's source of nutrition (Deut. 8:3), is a lamp to his feet (Ps. 119:105), gives understanding (Ps. 119:130), keeps his way pure (Ps. 119:9) because it is pure (Ps. 119:140), can judge his thoughts and intentions (Heb. 4:12), is a mirror into which he is to look so he can judge himself rightly (Jam. 1:23-25), is truth (John 17:17), is the Word of God (2 Pet. 1:19-21) and is all that he needs for spiritual growth (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The summation of these truths is why Bible reading, study, memorization and meditation are so important to a Christian's life. Therefore a pastor/elder needs to set his heart to study it accurately (2 Tim. 2:15), practicing and teaching it (Ezra 7:10). As God's Word, it will have the effect of sanctifying him and its hearers (cf. John 17:17). Without the influence of the Word of God in a Christian's life, he will not grow in his faith, will not walk close with the Lord and will struggle with sin and with knowing and understanding clearly God's will and plan for his life. Therefore, if a believer is not feeding upon the Bread of Life, he will starve spiritually (cf. Amos 8:11-12; Matt. 4:4) and not grow into a mature man (cf. Heb. 5:13).

Prayer is also an important part of a pastor/elder's daily devotional time. It is a special, concentrated time to communicate with his God. He is always to have an attitude of prayer (1 Thes. 5:17), being devoted to it (Rom. 12:12). It is during this time he has the opportunity to give thanks (Psa. 33:2; 1 Thes. 5:18; 2 Thes. 1:3; 2:13), praise (Psa. 9:2; 34:1; Heb. 13:15), confess (Psa. 51), intercede (cf. Mat. 5:44; 2 Cor. 13:9; Eph. 6:18-19; Col. 1:3,9; Jam. 5:16), cast his burdens (Psa. 62:8; Php. 4:6-7; 1 Pet. 5:7; cf. Rom. 8:26-27), and make requests (cf. Ps. 5:2; Psa. 32:6; Php. 4:6; 1 Thes. 5:17; Jam. 5:13) to his God. This is also when God has the opportunity to speak to His child, who theoretically is at a heightened state of sensitivity to Him and His will, as he is seeking and communicating with His Heavenly Father on various issues.

Prayer is a discipline which over time can become meaningless, as with any of the other spiritual disciplines. When a pastor/elder is earnestly seeking God and

His will, then this can be a time of spiritual refreshment as God answers and guides him in praying within His perfect will. It is also when he can make a contribution through his prayers, literally affecting events in his own home, community, nation and throughout the world. This is possible because the God of the universe, his Heavenly Father, considers his every prayer and determines the best way to answer each of them. This is the case even in those times when the one praying is unsure of how to pray about a situation, for He understands and knows the person's heart on the issue (Psa. 139:1-5). A believer can be assured of this for Paul told the Romans: "In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of* God" (Rom. 8:26-27). God so desires to know each believer (cf. Psa. 139:1-5) and what is burdening his heart (Psa. 62:8) that His Holy Spirit searches him and intercedes to Him on his behalf. King David stated in Psalm 62:8: "Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us." Therefore during prayer and throughout the day, God desires that His child run to Him as his refuge, trusting in Him. When he is before God, he is able to pour out his heart to Him (everything that is in it, every last drop). This is the blessing of prayer -- being able to cast all of one's burdens upon his Heavenly Father, the One who cares (1 Pet. 5:7).

Previously it was mentioned about praying in the morning. There is no specific time the Scriptures designate when a person must pray, read the Bible, etc. The key to a good devotional life is consistency. If for this to happen a person needs to do it at 5:00 a.m. or 5:00 p.m., this is unimportant. A person needs to create a schedule that will work for him, but having one's devotions at the beginning of their day is a wonderful way to start a day. For some, their day may begin at 4:00 a.m. and for others at 4:00 p.m. So whenever your day starts, if at all possible, start it with time spent alone with the Lord. The Scriptures record that Jesus arose at the start of each day and prayed (Mark 1:35; Luke 4:42). He prayed at other times as well (Luke 5:16; 6:12). King David said in Psalm 5:1-3: "Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my groaning. Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God, for to You I pray. In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; in the morning I will order *my prayer* to You and *eagerly* watch." David prayed in the morning and eagerly watched for God's answer throughout the day. This is a good example for the pastor/elder as well.

Scripture memorization:

Scripture memorization is vital to a pastor/elder for his spiritual life and ministry. When he memorizes God's Word, hiding it in his heart, it will always be with him no matter where he goes or what situation he encounters. The Holy Spirit is able to recall to his mind God's Word and use it in his life. This is important for God said: "'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,' declares 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" (Isa. 55:8-9). When faced with difficult situations in which he is not sure what to do, God and His Word can guide him in the right path; not necessarily the one that he himself might have chosen. Having God's Word hidden in his heart will strengthen his trust in God (Prov. 22:17-19), will be a reminder of godly living and not sinning against Him (Psa.

119:11), will help him walk steady and be stable in his daily life (Psa. 37:31), will be pleasant to him and guard him from the evil way (Pro. 2:10-11), and will make him more effective in his ability to teach others (Col. 3:16). All of this culminates in the words of Psalm 40:8: "I delight to do Thy will, O my God; Thy Law is within my heart."

Another advantage to having the Word of God hidden in his heart is that he is then able to mediate upon it wherever he goes. God's Word should always be the basis of his meditation: "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success" (Josh. 1:8). The pastor/elder who makes God's Word the basis of his meditation is blessed (Psa. 1:1-2). His meditation will result in obedience as he considers His ways (cf. Psa. 119:15). He will say with the psalmist: "O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psa. 119:97). He can also say as David said in Psalm 63:6: "When I remember Thee on my bed, I meditate on Thee in the night watches." David's meditation on God's Word kept him from his sleep because he would think about the vastness and greatness of God as the night passed before him; pondering how the things of God are so awesome and wonderful.

Often people say they do not memorize Scripture because they are unable to memorize. Although it may be difficult at first, God will bless those who persevere at drawing close to Him (cf. Deut. 4:29; Psa. 34:10; Jam. 4:8). As one makes progress, it becomes easier to memorize God's Word. Writing verses out on note cards and taking them with you as you go about your day is a good way to work at hiding God's Word in your heart. Also, making Scripture memory a part of your daily devotional time is helpful and profitable. It is beneficial to begin by recalling those verses that you already have memorized, writing them on note cards if you have not already done so. Then add those verses which you have almost memorized, and work on committing them to memory. Continue to add verses you want to know. It will also be beneficial to memorize verses which have special meaning or are helpful to your life. Memorizing verses which you need to share the gospel is also essential. Since it is hard to remember the verse's reference (book, chapter and verse number), it is good to say this at the beginning and end of each verse as you recite it.

Bible study:

The study of God's Word is a process which is different from simply reading and/or memorizing the Scriptures. Reading the Bible can be compared to walking down the street and simply observing things from a distance. Bible study on the other hand is much more detailed and thorough. It is not just walking down the street, but it is stopping at various places along the way for a period of time to investigate, look behind every bush and under every rock, ask questions of everyone you see, and then correlating that information with other information you had already know, trying to understand everything you have observed and studied within its context. While Bible reading is important, for a pastor/elder, Bible study is crucial.

Studying the Bible is how the pastor/elder is going to learn and grow as he better comes to understand God's Word. The problem is that Bible study, though it is worthwhile and provides valuable insight, is difficult. It takes time and a lot of

effort; but such effort will be blessed of God in direct proportion, or greater, to the amount of effort exerted. Bible study is necessary for the pastor/elder who needs to "be diligent to present [himself] approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). As a teacher of God's Word, he is to be careful: "Let not many *of you* become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment" (Jam. 3:1). The pastor/elder who does not spend a sufficient amount of time studying God's Word yet still teaches, and inaccurately at that, will one day have to answer to Jesus for this. This is why it is vitally important that he is not simply teaching the traditions of a famous person, church or denomination (cf. Mark 7:1-13), but the Word of God as a result of his personal study. The pastor/elder must handle accurately the Word of truth and be fully convinced in his own mind what he believes (Rom. 14:5). This way he will not condemn himself in what he approves (Rom. 14:22). He is to read the Word of God, memorize it and meditate upon it, digging deep into its texts as a miner digs deep into the depths of the earth to discover valuable jewels hidden there. Once found, the pastor/elder can take this wealth of information and share it with those in his church (cf. 2 Tim. 2:2). The pastor/elder who neglects this spiritual discipline will come to church each Sunday, stand before his congregation, speak words which have no life because they are not empowered by the Holy Spirit, and speak on topics which the congregation has heard many times before because he has nothing new to say. This kind of preaching/teaching can kill a church and the work of the Holy Spirit within it. This man will have to answer for such poor labor (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10-15). On the other hand, "the elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching" (1 Tim 5:17).

Special times alone with God:

Special times alone with God can be very rewarding, refreshing and intimate. A pastor/elder can emerge from these times with a renewed perspective on life, ministry, and relationships. These times can change him and have a profound impact in his life. Jesus went away alone to spend time with His Father (Mat. 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 6:12-13; 22:41), sometimes spending whole nights in prayer with Him (Luke 6:12). Others who also spent time alone with God, although it was God who beckoned them into His presence, were Jacob (32:24-31), Moses (Exo. 3:1-4:17; 24:18; 34:28-29), and Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-18). As a result of these meetings, their lives were impacted greatly. These times alone with God left them with a new and better understanding of who God is, a direction for their lives, and the specifics of what God wanted them to do. Although these results may not always be the outcome of a person's time alone with God, some elements and potential benefits can be:

- Seeking God (Psa. 105:1-7; Pro. 28:5; Lam. 3:25; Jam. 1:5)
- Fellowship with God (1 Cor 1:9; 1 John 1:3)
- Confession (Psa. 32:5; 38:18; 41:4; 51; Pro. 28:13; 1 John 1:9)
- Worship (Psa. 2:11; 95:6; Mat. 4:10)
- Prayer (Psa. 32:6; Luke 18:1; Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2; 1 Thes. 5:17; Jude 20)
- Contemplation (Deut. 8:2; Hag. 1:5,7; Psa. 26:2; 139; Lam. 3:40; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:4)
- Meditation (Psa. 1:1-2; 4:4; 19:14; 63:6; 119:15,27,48,97,99,148)

- Hearing God (cf. Pro. 3:5-6; Php. 3:15; Heb. 4:12)
- Emotional and spiritual healing (Psa. 107:20; 147:3; Php. 4:6-7; 1 Pet. 5:7)
- Refreshment (Jer. 31:25; Acts 3:19)
- Encouragement (Rom. 15:4-5; 2 Cor. 1:3-4; 7:6; Php. 2:1; Col. 2:1-2)
- Rest (cf. Exo. 34:21; Mat. 14:13; Mark 6:31-32)

These special times with God can take different forms. A person can spend them alone by himself or with others. They can be as long or as short as their schedule allows (hours or days in length). They can be taken monthly, quarterly or yearly. These times can be accompanied with fasting. During these times a person may do various things, such as reading the Bible and/or Christian book, using a hymnal to spend time singing, walking while meditating on Scripture, worshipping, and/or praying. He may even take a nap during this time and/or sit and fellowship with other believers. These times should never be so rigid that the day's schedule becomes one's focus and not God. This is why when spending time with God, one needs to shut off his cell phone and shut out the world. Furthermore, flexibility needs to be an important characteristic of this time as one seeks God and waits upon Him (cf. Psa. 62:5; 103:5-6; Isa. 40:31; 49:23; 64:4; Lam. 3:25) to hear from Him and be empowered by Him. The one seeking needs to relax before God and look to Him in expectation (Heb. 11:6). Such times set aside for God will be blessed of Him (cf. Psa. 37:4-6).

Fasting:

Fasting is probably the least practiced and least desirable of the spiritual disciplines, but nonetheless one which is profitable and beneficial. About His disciples, Jesus said: "But *the* days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days" (Luke 5:35). The Bridegroom is gone, therefore, there seems to be an implication that fasting is to be practiced in a Christian's life today.

For what reasons should believers fast? In the Scriptures, fasting was done for many reasons: when mourning (Jud. 20:26; 1 Sam. 31:13), as a response to sin (1 Sam. 7:6), to gain God's favor (2 Sam. 12:21-22), when seeking God (2 Chron. 20:3; Dan. 9:3), as an act of humbling oneself when petitioning God (Ezra 8:21-23; Neh. 1:1-5; Est. 4:16), to gain release from sinful passions resulting in becoming a person of compassion (Isa. 58:6-7), when seeking compassion from God (Joel 1:14-16), as evidence of repentance (Joel 2:12-13; Jon. 3:5), in preparation for ministry (Mat. 4:1-2), and when commissioning and dedicating Christian workers to the Lord (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23). When fasting, as with many of the spiritual disciplines, it is to be a personal and often private act. It is not to be done for the acclaim of man, but for the approval of God. Those who fast only to be noticed by God will be rewarded by Him (Matt. 6:16-18).

What kinds of fasts are recorded in the Bible? There were fasts when people abstained from just food (2 Sam. 12:20-21), from food and water for periods lasting no more than three days in length, unless they were supernatural in nature (Exo 34:28; 1 Kings 19:8; Ezra 10:6; Est. 4:16; Acts 9:9), or just from tasty foods (Dan. 10:3). The type of fast a person chooses is up to him or as directed by the Lord.

How often or for how long should a believer fast? In the Bible, we observe fasts which lasted three days (Est. 4:16; Acts 9:9), seven days (1 Sam. 31:13), three weeks (Dan. 10:2-3), and forty days (Mat. 4:2). There are also supernatural fasts recorded in which the person went long periods of time without food or water (Exo. 34:28; 1 Kings 19:8). When a person fasts, especially for any length of time, they need to consider health issues as well as their work schedule. Poor health or an active schedule can hinder the attainment of their goal. It can also cause them to become sick, weak or even faint. Depending on their health, some people should consult their physician beforehand. It is also recommended that if someone desires to fast for an extended period, he not do so before having completed some shorter fasts first. One may begin by skipping just one meal and using that time for prayer and the reading of God's Word (cf. Job 23:12). He may follow this then by not eating for an entire day. Please note that this section on fasting is not meant to be an all inclusive study on the topic. It is recommended that you first consult your doctor and read a book or two on the topic first.

When considering a fast, take time to plan it; how you will spend your time, and where you will do this. Prepare for it through prayer and reading God's Word. Consider if you will drink only water, or water and/or tea, and/or juice, and/or eat non tasty foods. Plan your time so that you will not have an active schedule; and if possible, so that you can be alone. During your fast, plan times of prayer, reading the Word of God, as well as singing and listening to music that will encourage you in your walk with Christ. If you want to fast with your spouse, a friend, or even a group of people, then plan times when you can be alone and other times when you are together as a group for prayer, singing and the reading of God's Word. Then, as you do this, look to God and expect to see Him work: "And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

Evangelism:

Each believer has a personal responsibility to share his faith in Christ with the lost (cf. Mat. 28:19). Jesus told those listening to His Sermon on the Mount: "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Mat. 5:13-16). Jesus spoke these words to the people of Israel. They, as a nation, were to be such a light to the Gentile nations (Exo. 19:5-6; Deut. 4:5-8; 14:2; 26:18-19; 28:1,9-14); but they failed miserably over the centuries in doing so (2 Kings 16:7-18; Jer. 6:1-8; 16:10-13; Ezk. 5:5-6; 36:22-23). The application of this passage applies to Christians as well. Christians are to be salt (cf. Col. 4:6) and light (Rom. 13:11-14; Eph. 5:8-11; Php. 2:15); like a city set on a hill for all to see, shining their light in such a way that their Father will be glorified (1 Thes. 2:12; 1 Pet. 2:9).

Reaching the lost is very important to God (2 Pet. 3:9) and to Jesus (Mark 10:45; Titus 2:14), and is the reason why He came to earth to die on a cross (1 Pet.

3:18). Even after His death and before His ascension, Jesus commissioned His disciples to reach the lost (Mat. 28:18-20), not only those who were around them, but by going to the ends of the earth to do so (Acts 1:8). "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). As a result of this, Paul said: "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, *as though* seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person" (Col. 4:5-6). This is the task and a discipline of each believer.

Service:

Service is another important aspect of the Christian life. As disciples of Christ, Christians are to serve and follow His example as a servant. Mark recorded about Jesus: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Jesus fulfilled this statement when He served believers by going to the cross.

Serving others was so important to Jesus that it was the last topic He taught about before going to the cross. The night He was taken He performed the task of a humble servant by washing the feet of His disciples. It was after this act of service that Jesus said to them: "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for *so* I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor *is* one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them" (John 13:13-17). Jesus' point was that if He who is greater than His followers, their Lord and their Teacher, washed their feet, how much more are they to serve others? If they do this, following His example, they will be blessed. This correlates with 1 John 2:5-6 which says, "...By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked." Therefore believers are to follow the example of their Savior and serve others.

One problem with serving is that too often the servant desires to be served by others and not to serve. Even James and John came to Jesus asking Him to place them, one on His left side and one on His right side in glory; but Jesus answered them with these words: "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all" (Mark 10:42-44). Sadly to say, many times pastors, elders and evangelists in the church act as rulers of the Gentiles instead of as servants and slaves. They, having become influenced by society instead of the Scriptures, desire the praise of men more than the praise of God. Church leaders especially need to be careful; because on the one hand, they are specially called of God as leaders (Eph. 4:8,11-16) who have great responsibility (1 Pet. 5:1-4; Heb. 13:17) and are to be highly esteemed in love and appreciated by the church (1 Thes. 5:12-13). Yet on the other hand, they are to be servants to the very people over whom they have responsibility (Mark 10:42-45). Therefore it can become a temptation for a leader to lord it over his

people. A servant leader does have its challenges, but such a life can be lived out in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Church leaders are to serve God and not work for the things of this world (Matt. 6:24; Luke 4:8; Jam. 4:4). As they serve, they are to do so humbly (Php. 2:3-4), not being self-serving, but doing what they do for the benefit of God and others (2 Cor. 4:5). For this they will be honored (John 12:26). “Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself *to serve,* and have them recline *at the table,* and will come up and wait on them" (Luke 12:37).

Stewardship:

Stewardship is a discipline which encompasses how a person uses those things entrusted to him by God, including such things as his family (Pro. 13:24; Eph. 5:26-30; 6:4; Col. 3:21; 1 Pet. 3:7), money (Luke 16:11), possessions (Mat. 6:19-21), time (Eph. 5:16), spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:7; 1 Pet. 4:10-11), his body (1 Cor. 6:13,15,17,19-20; 1 Thes. 4:4), etc. A steward will one day have to give an account of these things to his Master (2 Cor. 5:10; cf. Mat. 25:19; Luke 16:1-2).

The main goal of a good steward is to be found trustworthy (1 Cor. 4:2; cf. Luke 12:42-44), for a trustworthy steward who is found faithful by God will be rewarded (Mat. 25:21; Luke 12:35-37; 19:17,19,24-26). The worthless steward on the other hand will not be rewarded. As a result of his poor performance, he will not be entrusted with greater riches (Luke 16:10-13) and/or greater responsibilities (cf. Luke 19:17,19,20-26) as the faithful steward will be. Instead one day he will be punished for his poor stewardship (cf. Mat. 25:24-30; Luke 19:20-24,26).

How a steward carries out his responsibilities is a direct reflection of his maturity in Christ. A person who is mature in his faith will use all that he has for the glory of God (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31). His desire will be to use these things to the greatest extent in his service to God. He understands that he is in a race (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Heb. 12:1); therefore it will be his desire and goal to win the prize. To do this, he needs to be shrewd (cf. Mat. 10:16; Luke 16:8-9) in how he uses those things which God has entrusted to him.

As a believer in Jesus Christ, one's stewardship is an important part of his faith because it speaks to the seriousness of it and his relationship with Christ (cf. Titus 2:11-14). Therefore a steward needs to use his time and other resources on earth wisely (cf. Rom. 13:11-14).

Giving:

Christians are to be generous people (cf. Pro. 22:9; Mark 12:41-44; 2 Cor. 9:6-7; 1 Tim. 6:17-18) who give sacrificially (Luke 21:1-4; Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 8:1-5). The believer's example of generosity is God the Father and Jesus Christ. God gave the world His best -- Jesus (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 9:15). Jesus gave the world Himself (Heb. 12:2-3). God continues to give to His children all they need (Rom. 8:31-32;

Php. 4:19). As a result of the great generosity of God the Father and God His Son, believers are to manifest this discipline as well.

Jesus, upon giving His disciples the authority to heal and perform miracles, told them: "Heal *the* sick, raise *the* dead, cleanse *the* lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give" (Mat. 10:8). Christians as well are to give freely of what has been given to them. Jesus also said: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (Mat. 6:19-21,24). God never meant that everything He gives His children is to be just for them. To the contrary, He gives to them so that they will share with others (cf. Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; 1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:13-15; 9:6-15); believers and unbelievers (Gal. 6:7-10).

The believer is not only to give to those in need such as the widow, the orphan and the poor (Deut. 10:18; 24:19-21; 26:12-13; Gal. 2:10; Jam. 1:27; 2:15-17; 1 John 3:17), but to his church as well. In the Old Testament, a tithe was required by God of a man's total produce (Deut. 14:22); grain, new wine and oil (Deut. 14:23). The tithe was holy to the Lord (Lev. 27:30) and was to be used to supply the needs of the Levites "in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting" (Lev. 18:21). Those who did not give of their tithe, God said, were robbing Him and were cursed for doing so (Mal. 3:8-9). Yet He told them to test Him: "'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,' says the LORD of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast *its grapes,*' says the LORD of hosts. 'All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,' says the LORD of hosts" (Mal. 3:10-12). In other words, those in the nation of Israel who would trust God by their tithe would be blessed of Him. The same principle is repeated in the New Testament.

Whereas in the Old Testament a tithe was required of the people of Israel, in the New Testament there is not a required amount specified that believers are to give to the church. One principle of giving was stated by Paul when he was taking up an offering for the poor believers in Jerusalem. He told the Corinthians: "On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2). They were to lay aside money for the offering in direct proportion to how they had been prospered. So on Sunday a believer was to consider how God had prospered him the previous week, and then in proportion to that, set money aside for the offering. Another principle of New Testament giving is found in 2 Corinthians 9, where Paul further told the Corinthians: "Now this *I say,* he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:6-7). The point here is that a person will be blessed in proportion to how he gives. If he gives sparingly, he will reap sparingly. If he is generous in his giving, then God will be generous toward him. God does not want His children giving "grudgingly" (when they do not want to) "or under compulsion" (when they feel they

have to). He desires that they be cheerful givers, giving joyfully. To the person who gives cheerfully and generously, God will supply even more, multiplying what He gives him even before he uses it. This will result in the maximum distribution and impact of a believer's resources (2 Cor. 9:10).

How much money should a Christian give to his church? As with the people of Israel, the tithe -- ten percent -- of a person's gross income is a good place to begin. It seems that the tithe was a standard in Old Testament times because even before the Law of Moses was given, Abraham paid a tithe to Melchizedek, King of Salem who "was a priest of God Most High" (Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 7:6-10). Beginning with a tithe, a person can then later give up and beyond that as God prospers him (cf. 1 Cor. 16:2). Also, a person should always give to God first before spending his money on anything else, for in doing so he honors God (Pro. 3:9-10). When God comes first, then the believer's other needs will be met (Mat. 6:25-34; cf. Php. 4:15-19). Giving in this manner is a test of one's faith (cf. 2 Cor. 9:13), in contrast to giving to God from what is left after all other needs are met.

In addition, a generous, cheerful giver will share what he has with others in need (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35), doing this not for the praise of men, but for God (Mat. 6:1-4; cf. Acts 4:36-5:11); thus laying up treasures for himself in heaven (Mat. 6:19-21). A cheerful giver realizes that a generous man will be blessed and will increase (Pro. 11:24-26; 22:9; 2 Cor. 9:6-11; Php. 4:14-19) in proportion to his generosity (2 Cor. 9:6). He understands that ultimately God is the owner of all things (Deut. 10:14; Psa. 24:1), and that all good things which he possesses come from Him (Jam. 1:17). He knows that he is never to be greedy nor seek riches (1 Tim. 6:9-11), but instead be satisfied with what God provides for him (cf. 1 Tim. 6:8,17). In the words of Agur the son of Jakeh: "Two things I asked of You, do not refuse me before I die: keep deception and lies far from me, give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion, that I not be full and deny *You* and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or that I not be in want and steal, and profane the name of my God" (Pro. 30:7-9).

Journaling:

Keeping a journal is one way in which people can record things that God has done in their lives. By doing so, they can look back and see such things as God's faithfulness, lessons learned, commitments made, answers to prayer, high points, low points, changes that have occurred in their lives, etc. Through such an instrument they can remember, be encouraged in their faith, and teach others.

God and the people of Israel did similar things. On many occasions God told the people of Israel to "remember" things which He did not want them to forget (Deut. 4:10; 5:15; 7:18; 8:2; 8:18; 9:7,27; 15:15; 16:3,12; 24:9,18,22; 25:17; 32:7). God placed a rainbow in the sky to remind people of all generations that He would never again flood the world with water to destroy all living flesh on it (Gen. 9:8-17). On one occasion God told Moses to write a prophecy in a book as a memorial (cf. Exo. 17:14); and then in response to this, Moses built an altar as a physical reminder (Exo. 17:15-16). God also told the Israelites to make tassels on the corners of their garments to which they were to attach a blue cord. The tassels were to remind them of all of God's commandments so that they would obey them and be holy to God, not following after their own hearts and eyes (Num. 15:38-39). On another occasion

God told Joshua to set up 12 stones as a sign and a memorial to future generations of how He had cut off the waters of the Jordan before the ark of the covenant when the children of Israel crossed into the land of Canaan (Jos. 4:6-7). Mordecai and Esther established a feast as a reminder of the time when God rid the Jews of their enemies (Est. 9:20-28). The Bible is full of memorials and writings that God gave to His people so that they would remember and not forget. The Bible itself is a memorial and reminder to believers.

Journaling for the believer can be his own personal record of how God has blessed his life in good times and bad, in times of sickness and health, through times of blessings and even in times of discipline, etc. Not only can this journal be a blessing to him, but possibly to future generations.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERS, CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. List which of the ten disciplines described that you practice on a regular basis. Next to each discipline list how often you practice it (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly, etc.)

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2. List which of the ten disciplines described that you do not practice at all:

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3. As you look over the lists above, how do you feel about your success or lack of it in these areas of your Christian life? Do you desire to grow in these areas?

4. Please list three disciplines which you want to incorporate into your life immediately. Next to them state how often you desire to practice them (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly):

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5. Please take the time now to develop a reasonable, attainable plan which you will follow to incorporate these three disciplines in your Christian life. Determine a date by which you desire to be practicing these disciplines. Please note that no matter how good your plan, it must be carried out in the power and strength of the Holy Spirit if you expect to accomplish it. If you are not depending upon Him, then you will not be successful in making these disciplines lifelong practices. This must be the goal because your Christian life is a lifelong process; therefore your implementation of these spiritual disciplines must be as well.

   Implementation date: _____

6. Please list three additional disciplines which you would like to incorporate into your life after you have successfully begun the above three. Next to them state how often you desire to practice them (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly) and when you would like to begin working on them.

   Starting date: _____

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When and if you decide to incorporate these disciplines into your life is your decision. Please remember that this decision will ultimately impact your walk with Christ, your effectiveness as a Christian, your potential impact as a leader, and ultimately your eternity.

CHURCH LEADER'S PERSONAL GROWTH:

Bible Study Methods

Rules of interpretation:

The methodology used to study the Bible is vital as to how it is understood and taught. This is why pastors and church leaders need to be careful how they study and teach the Word of God. Because of the importance of this task, a church leader must "be diligent to present [himself] approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Therefore he who expounds the Word of God needs to be certain that the message he proclaims as, "Thus says the Lord," actually is what God says in His Word. A church leader must remember that he will one day give an account for his teachings. James made this clear when he warned his readers, stating: "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment" (Jam. 3:1). God takes seriously how His Word is taught, and He expects those who teach it to take it seriously as well. He does not expect church leaders to teach "as doctrines the precepts of men" (Mat. 15:9), nor to add or take away from His Word (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Pro. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18), thus manipulating or forcing their will and desires upon others as the scribes and Pharisees did, loading them down with unreasonable and heavy burdens (Mat. 23:1-4). Therefore they need to be sure they are not distorting of the Word of God, for one day they will be held accountable as to how they handled the Word of God.

There are two basic approaches when studying God's Word -- the deductive approach and the inductive approach. The deductive approach is when the student goes to the biblical text with preconceived ideas of what it is expressing. This approach can be dangerous because he is attributing a meaning to the text which the text may in fact not be conveying. For example in Luke 6:31, Jesus said: "Treat others the same way you want them to treat you." Using the deductive approach to Bible study, someone who was mistreated by someone else might view this verse in the following manner: "He treated me badly, therefore that must mean that he wants to be treated badly in return." Such an interpretation could be a catalyst for retaliation and revenge since the verse was not correctly interpreted within its proper context. Often this is the way in which Bible study is approached. When this occurs,

the sermons which are preached and the Bible studies which are taught are a distortion of the truth.

When using the inductive approach to Bible study, the Bible student studies the Word of God with the objective of understanding the intent of the biblical writer. In other words, he will not interpret the passage from his own preconceived notions, but instead will derive from the text its actual meaning. To do this he needs to take into account at least five rules of interpretation:

1. Literal
2. Contextual
3. Historical
4. Grammatical
5. Dispensational

Understanding a text in its literal or normal form is important to understanding the correct meaning of the passage. What this means is that the Bible student must interpret the passage normally, as he would any other piece of literature; understanding the form of writing the author used. For example, did the author write straightforwardly (without figures of speech), metaphorically, allegorically, poetically, proverbially, prophetically, etc.? In understanding these writing styles, the Bible student will gain insight into how the author meant his writings to be understood.

When studying a passage contextually, the Bible student must work at understanding the passage within its context within the Bible. Therefore, he must first attempt to understand the passage within its immediate context (surrounding verse or verses), then within the context of the paragraph in which it is located, then within its immediate chapter, followed by its surrounding chapters, book, genre, testament, and then the Bible as a whole. This is important because in order for the biblical writer's original intent to be understood, the Bible student must understand the thought process of the writer from beginning to end. This is not possible if the passage is isolated and interpreted outside of its context.

Knowing the historical context of a passage is also vital when trying to understand the author's original intent. While writing, he wrote from his historical perspective, which was commonplace to him, yet unknown to his modern-day readers. This is why it is important for the Bible student to ascertain the historical context, as well as read commentaries and histories which address that era and geographical locale. Doing so will help the student understand historical background information which will give insight into the context and original meaning of the passage.

Understanding the grammar of a passage is also key to properly interpreting its meaning. Considering the syntax of a verse helps the Bible student understand sentence structure. Understanding the meanings of biblical words as they were understood when they were written is also crucial because many words have changed in nuance or in meaning over time. Therefore taking this lexical information into account is necessary if the Bible student wants to properly understand the correct intent of the passage. Not doing so can lead to a misinterpretation and an inaccurate handling of the Word of God.

Interpreting a passage from a dispensational perspective is also imperative. This is accomplished when the Bible student takes into account in which dispensation[13] or economy (cf. Eph. 1:10, "administration") a passage of Scripture was written in or refers to. This is important because he must understand when and to whom a specific passage of Scripture was written. For example, in the Law of Moses, do the dietary and priestly laws apply to believers today? If so, why do they apply? If not, then why not? Also, how does someone determine which promises in Scripture apply strictly to the nation of Israel and which apply to the church? Someone who does not take into account dispensational interpretation may apply passages meant for Israel to the church. They also may not view the church and Israel as two separate entities, but the church as an extension of the nation of Israel. Again, an improper interpretation of a passage can result when not studying the Scriptures from a dispensational perspective.

Bible study methods:

What are the basic steps for studying the Bible? The four simple yet necessary steps are:

1. Observation
2. Interpretation
3. Correlation
4. Application

These four steps can be compared to the process used by a detective who is investigating a crime scene. All are necessary to come to a correct conclusion and application.

Observation is the first step of Bible study. In this first part of the process, the student (biblical detective) looks at the passage and makes observations. In this step, he makes notes of things which he sees. He asks questions. He looks for answers to his questions. It is during this part of the process that the five rules of interpretation which were discussed previously are incorporated (literal, contextual, historical, grammatical, dispensational). After the student has made his observations and answered his questions, he then moves on to the second step in the process.

In this next step, he takes all the information collected in the first step and then interprets the passage in light of what he has learned. This is a crucial step and is the reason why it is important that the student use the inductive rather than the deductive approach to Bible study. He needs to let the passage speak for itself and not come to it with his own, preconceived ideas. If he did the appropriate work necessary in the observation step, then the facts gained should lead (induce) the student to a correct conclusion. But, as in any process, verifying that conclusion is always important.

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[13] A dispensation is a period of time determined by God during which He governs mankind according to His will. This does not however refer to how mankind is saved since it is always by grace through faith.

If the Bible student desires to verify his conclusions, then the third step of correlation is imperative. This part of the process is when he looks at the rest of Scripture to correlate his findings. The question to ask is: “Do my conclusions agree with the rest of Scripture?” If they do correlate, then the student has properly done his job. If there are contradictions, then it is possible that he has come to an incorrect conclusion, or has not correctly understood the passage or passages which he is trying to correlate. Either way, the Bible does not contradict itself but will always agree with itself. Once the student feels confident that he has reached the proper conclusion in regards to the passage, he can then move on to the final step, that of application.

In the application portion of this process, the student takes what he has learned and applies the passage for his audience. Though a Bible passage has only one correct interpretation, that being the intent desired by the author, that same passage may be applied many different ways. Though this is true, the student needs to keep in mind that his application must remain within the boundaries of what the passage is teaching. As an example, Paul said in Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” To apply this verse to a person who desires to run a marathon would be an incorrect application. Why? Because the immediate context of this verse is a discussion by Paul about being able to live in both difficult and abundant circumstances. Therefore the application would have to be confined to this context, that of being able to do all things through Christ in the face of poverty or abundance; both situations needing the strength of Christ. The only time this principle of application would not be true is if there are other passages which state the same truth of Philippians 4:13, but in another context. The Bible student needs to be careful how he applies the Scriptures.

Another important aspect of Bible study to remember is that the Bible best interprets itself, therefore it is its best commentary. This is why the more a person knows the Bible, the deeper he will be able to study it. This is also why a church leader should read the whole Bible yearly and study and teach through entire books. In doing so, he will become more familiar with the Bible as a whole and its teachings, not just parts of it. Also, reading the entire Bible each year will give him a perspective which takes into account the whole of Scripture. He will then be able to better understand other portions of the Bible in the context of the entire Bible. God blesses such devotion to His Word. As a result, He gives greater and deeper insight which the average superficial reader will never gain. Therefore, when trying to understand one portion of the Bible, use the whole of Scripture to gain insight into that portion.

One great encouragement in the Bible study process is that the believer has a Helper (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19) to assist him in his study, this being the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps believers know and understand truth (cf. John 16:13). Therefore as a believer studies a passage looking for answers, the Holy Spirit will guide him in this process (cf. Rom. 8:26-27; 1 John 2:27). The Bible student ought to rely upon his Helper, the Spirit of truth (cf. John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13) as he studies the Bible, for He will lead him into all truth.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERS, CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. As a teacher of the Word of God, do you clearly understand the privilege you have as well as the responsibility? Are you taking this responsibility seriously?

2. When studying the Word of God, which approach do you use -- the inductive or deductive approach? Do you understand the difference between the two approaches? Do you understand the danger of the deductive approach?

3. When interpreting a passage, do you take into consideration the various rules of interpretation (literal, contextual, historical, grammatical and dispensational)? Do you see the importance of these rules? Are there books you should purchase to help you better interpret the Bible; and if so, which ones?

4. Do you use the fours steps of Bible study methods discussed previously (observation, interpretation, correlation, and application)? Do you ever skip the observation step and go right to the interpretation step? If you skip the observation step, are you doing inductive or deductive Bible study?

5. What can you do to be a better student and teacher of the Word of God?

CHURCH LEADER'S PERSONAL GROWTH:

Message Preparation

The importance of this ministry:

The preaching/teaching ministry of the pastor/elder is the most significant aspect of his ministry. It is through the Word of God that he will feed his flock the inerrant (John 14:26; cf. Gal. 3:16), inspired (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21), infallible (Mat. 5:18) imperishable, living and enduring Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23). It is through this ministry that his flock will be sanctified by the Word (John 17:17) which is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword as it pierces the soul and spirit, judging the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb. 4:12). This is how the pastor/elder will equip his flock (cf. Eph. 4:11-16) in the understanding of and use of the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). It is this defensive weapon, a part of the believers' spiritual armor, that is so vital in effective warfare against the evil one and his horde (Eph. 6:11-13; cf. Mat. 4:4,7,10). Being so equipped, believers will then be able to make a defense for the hope that is in them (cf. Mat. 28:19; 1 Pet. 3:15).

Paul told the young pastor Timothy, "preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires" (2 Tim. 4:2-3). Now is the time that Paul was alluding to, for today many want their ears tickled; wanting to hear what fits their paradigm of life. They do not want to hear, "Thus says the Lord." That is why Paul told Timothy to preach the Word; reprove, rebuke and exhort, doing so with great patience and instruction. Timothy was to be ready "in season and out of season" to preach the Word. He was to preach, reprove, rebuke and exhort when the Word of God was in demand by his hearers and when it was not; just as when fruits and vegetables are in season (in demand) or out of season (not in demand). Timothy was not to preach what people wanted to hear, but what God had to say.

Because of the importance of this ministry, the preacher/teacher of the Word of God is to "be diligent to present [himself] approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

The minister of the Word of God needs to understand that his teachings are a spiritual sacrifice to God (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5). He needs to remember that God is “a great King” Whose “name is feared among the nations” (Mal. 1:14). He is to be respected and honored by offering Him messages which are worthy of the seriousness and significance of His Word, and not offering Him unacceptable sacrifices (Mal. 1:6,8). Therefore the preacher/teacher needs to make sure that he is delivering the messages that God has for His church and not presenting his own agenda. He needs to remember that he will be held accountable for his teaching one day. James spoke to this issue when he warned his readers: “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment” (Jam. 3:1). God takes seriously how His Word is taught, and He expects those who preach and teach it to do likewise. He does not expect church leaders to teach “as doctrines the precepts of men” (Mat. 15:9). He does not expect them to add or take away from His Word (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Pro. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18), forcing their own will and desires upon others as the scribes and Pharisees did who loaded the people down with unreasonable and heavy burdens (Mat. 23:1-4). This was not the example Jesus set, for He Himself said: “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Mat. 11:29-30). Therefore in the preaching/teaching ministry of church leaders, they need to be careful that they are not distorting God's Word; making people's loads heavy when they should be light for one day they will be held accountable for how they handled the Word of God.

Investing in this ministry:

If a pastor/elder desires to handle accurately the Word of truth and impact positively the lives of those inside and outside of his church, he must make an investment in this ministry. What should this investment consist of? Both time and money. To handle accurately the Word of truth, the pastor/elder needs to make this commitment. To quickly look over a passage without a detailed investigation is undeserving of the value of the text he will expound upon. It is also reckless, knowing that what he says may influence his hearers properly or improperly depending on his correct or incorrect interpretation and declaration of the Scriptures.

Money is the other investment he needs to make in order to purchase tools which will help him handle accurately the Word of truth. He ought to add to his library books which will assist him in understanding the Bible in its original languages, Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias, concordance, commentaries, histories, etc. This will be a costly investment, but one well worth it if he desires to do his job responsibly.

Philosophy of preaching:

When preaching and teaching the Word of God, the goal of the pastor is to present to his hearers an accurate explanation of the text. When doing so he needs to present it in its literal, historical, grammatical, contextual and dispensational context (see the article titled, "Bible Study Methods" for further information). With this information he will help his audience understand the passage as the writer meant it to be understood by his original audience. This is key to accurately teach

any passage of Scripture. This is called expository preaching, which was how Ezra the scribe taught the Law to the people of Israel: “They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading” (Neh. 8:8). Once this has been accomplished, the pastor may apply the passage to his modern context. This should be the goal of one's preaching as presented in Deuteronomy 31:12-13: “Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law. Their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.” The end result presented here is that the people will hear and learn to fear the Lord their God, and be careful to observe all the words of the law. This is the speaker’s job and objective!

There is debate today about which is the best way to preach and teach the Word of God. Some are adamant that it is best to preach and teach through entire books of the Bible, beginning with chapter 1, verse 1. Such people would say that teaching topical sermons (choosing a single passage or various passages on a certain topic and using them as your text) is not healthy for the church. One reason they believe this is because it is an easy way in which to misuse a passage, incorrectly taking it out of its original context, and making a point which the passage is not making. This is a valid concern.

One reason that some do not prefer topical preaching is because when a teacher is choosing topics, many times he chooses those he wants to preach on. Possibly they are not the ones God wants the church to hear at that time. This too is a valid concern. If a pastor teaches or preaches through entire books, he then is obligated to teach the themes of the text. This will keep him from preaching and teaching on just his favorite topics. Yet, there are times when a topical message or series of topical messages are necessary for a church, depending on what a church may be experiencing at any particular point in time. Dealing directly with the issue in this manner may be very beneficial. When writing this type of message, the teacher needs to be careful that he does not take passages out of context just to make his point. He must work diligently so that he accurately handles the Word of truth, just as when he writes an expository message. Therefore it is better for a pastor to teach through books, looking at them in their literal, historical, grammatical, contextual and dispensational context.

Another issue is how many messages should be preached in the course of a church service. In some churches only one message is preached, while in others, two or even three are preached during a Sunday morning service. Is one practice better than the other? The answer to this question depends on how the service is structured. The advantage to having just one message is that at the end of the service the congregation will leave with one main thought to meditate upon. This is especially true if the music and everything else which is done in the service is aimed at presenting the one theme. In the case where more than one sermon is preached, the people may leave the church with many thoughts from the different messages; possibly having so much to think about that they leave the service with nothing concrete to ponder. Yet if two or three messages are planned, and they are all addressing the same theme and complementing each other by presenting different aspects of the same theme, the effect can be very positive. The problem with this

scenario is that it is rarely the norm. If a church desires to do this, its challenge will be to get all of the speakers to accurately present the same thought, complementing one another with no contradictions week after week. To achieve this will take a lot of work on the part of each participant delivering the messages. But it can be done. Therefore, both methods can work, though one will take a lot more effort to be as effective as the other.

How sermons and Bible studies are prepared is also a crucial element because the better the information is prepared and organized both for the speaker and his audience, the better the message will be delivered. Although cultures may vary on the format of the message its recipients prefer, it is important that the information presented is logically systematized. One way to do this is to prepare the message in outline format. This puts the material in a logical order and in a pattern which will be easy for the speaker to utilize. If it is easy for him to use, then he will be able to better communicate it to his audience. Another way this process is enabled is when the teacher understands the passage he is teaching in its biblical context. To properly accomplish this he needs to diligently study his passage using the five rules of interpretation (see the chapter titled, "Bible Study Methods").

The process of preparing a sermon or Bible study:

As a result of what the teacher learns from his study, he should then be able to write a background statement summing up the pertinent information about the text. This statement will help him to keep his message and comments in their proper context. Here is an example using Matthew 6:25-34:

Background statement: This text is a portion of a sermon which Jesus preached to a large multitude in Galilee (Mat. 4:23-25). Galilee is a region in the northern part of Israel where Nazareth is located (Mat. 21:11), the city where Jesus grew up (Luke 2:39,51; 4:16; cf. Mat. 2:23; 26:71). Upon seeing the large crowd, Jesus went up on a mountain and began to teach them (Mat. 5:1). Up until this point in His message, Jesus taught the multitude about sanctified living, specifically about the characteristics of a true believer (Mat. 5:2-20), the higher standards by which a true believer should live (Mat. 5:21-48), and the practical standards by which he should live (Mat. 6:1-24). As Jesus transitioned from that context to the text which is the focus of this study (Mat. 6:25-34), He did so by stating that "no one can serve two masters" (vs. 24). This is why in verse 25 He begins by saying: "For this reason I say to you..." The phrase, "For this reason," is looking back to the previous context (vss. 19-24) which lays the foundation for this section. Therefore verses 25-34 are a continuation of Jesus' teaching on sanctified living, specifically on the practical standards by which a true believer should live. In this passage, Jesus will show that a true believer who serves just God as his one, true master does not need to worry; for if he seeks first God and His righteousness, then all his needs will be provided for.

The next step in this process which will help the teacher better understand the passage in its context is to outline the passage with main points and sub points. This is a way to diagram the passage in its logical order. When doing this, each

point should be a concise phrase which summarizes the verse, portion of the verse, or verses it is curtailing. Later in this process this outline will be modified, making it personal to its audience. Here is an example of an outline which presents the facts of the passage:

Factual outline:

I. Do not be worried about your life -- vs. 25
   A. About what you will eat or drink
   B. About what you will wear
   C. About food and clothing which are less important than your life and body

II. Consider God's provision for His creation -- vss. 26-30
   A. The birds of the air -- vss. 26-27
   B. The grass of the field -- vss. 28-30

III. Seek first God's kingdom and righteousness -- vss. 31-34
   A. Do not worry about food, drink and clothing -- vss. 31-32
   B. Seek the things of God and you will receive what you need -- vs. 33
   C. Do not worry about tomorrow -- vs. 34

After outlining the passage, the next step is to sum up the entire passage in one sentence. The goal of this sentence is to state the main idea of the biblical text. After his factual outline is completed, this should be done before he begins to write his message. Doing this will enable him to keep what he is about to write in focus and following the thought of the passage's main idea, as the background statement does. A goal in writing this sentence is to keep it as concise as possible so that it can be easily remembered. Therefore, the main idea of Matthew 6:25-34 is:

MAIN IDEA: Do not worry about your needs because your Heavenly Father will provide for those who seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.

Or it can be summed up like this:

MAIN IDEA: Do not worry because God will provide.

Once this sentence has been written, the passage's outline can be personalized based upon the main idea. Here is an example:

Personalized outline:

I. We as believers are not to worry about life -- vs. 25
   A. About what we eat and drink
   B. About what we will wear
   C. About those things which are necessary for life

II. Reasons why we as believers are not to worry -- vss. 26-30
   A. God takes care of the birds of the air -- vs. 26
   B. God determines the length of our life -- vs. 27
   C. God clothes the grass of the field -- vss. 28-30

III. How we as believers are to view life -- vss. 31-34
    A. We are not to worry about food, drink and clothing -- vss. 31-32
    B. We are to seek God's kingdom and righteousness -- vs. 33
    C. We are not to worry about tomorrow -- vs. 34

Once this is completed, the teacher can then more thoroughly study the passage and write the body of his message, including illustrations and applications. When he completes this process, then he can write the message's conclusion followed by its introduction. The introduction should be written last so that by then he completely understands the biblical text and can introduce his passage properly within its context. Below is an example of a message format based upon this process:

Matthew 6:25-34

Main idea: Do not worry about your needs because your Heavenly Father will provide for those who seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.

Introduction: People today worry about many things...

Background statement: This text is a portion of a sermon which Jesus preached to a large multitude in Galilee (Mat. 4:23-25)...

I. We as believers are not to worry about life -- vs. 25
    A. About what we eat and drink
    B. About what we will wear
    C. About those things which are necessary for life

II. Reasons why we as believers are not to worry -- vss. 26-30
    A. God takes care of the birds of the air -- vs. 26
    B. God determines the length of our life -- vs. 27
    C. God clothes the grass of the field -- vss. 28-30

III. How we as believers are to view life -- vss. 31-34
    A. We are not to worry about food, drink and clothing -- vss. 31-32
    B. We are to seek God's kingdom and righteousness -- vs. 33
    C. We are not to worry about tomorrow -- vs. 34

Conclusion: Jesus taught this to the multitude of His day, and to us as well, that...

Properly studying and teaching the Word of God takes a lot of work. But doing so is profitable, both for the one preparing the message and for his audience as well. This is what God expects of church leaders -- that they will work hard at preaching and teaching. Those who do this are to receive double honor (1 Tim. 5:17).

APPLICATION QUESTIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERS, CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. How would you rate your preaching ministry in comparison to your other ministries? Is it your most important ministry, or is another ministry more important? Please explain.

2. How many hours do you spend each week in preparation for a half hour message? Do you feel that you spend enough time in preparation, or is more time needed? What fruit do you see as a result of your preaching ministry? Is your church growing spiritually and/or numerically?

3. Do you feel it is necessary to spend many hours each week in preparation of a sermon? Or do you feel that preparation is not as important because the Holy Spirit will assist you when you preach a message in which you have invested little or no time? Explain your answer below after considering 2 Timothy 2:15 and James 3:1.

4. Have you invested money in books to help you prepare good, biblically-based messages? If you have not, would you like to be able to do this? What types of books would you like to purchase?

5. When you ask others to preach, are they asked far enough in advance giving them adequate time to prepare, or are they asked just before the service starts? Is such a practice wise? Do you need to change how and when you choose men to preach in the future?

6. How do you determine what you should preach each week? Do you find that oftentimes you preach on a specific theme (e.g., holiness, evangelism, prophecy, etc.)? If so, is this beneficial or would it be better to preach the whole of Scripture?

7. What kind of messages do you normally preach -- topical or expository (through entire books of the Bible)? Which do you feel are more profitable? Would it be beneficial to make a change in the way you preach?

8. How many sermons are preached during one service in your church? If more than one is preached, are they all on different themes or do they focus on the same theme? How do you think you can improve on this situation if they are all on different themes?

9. Did the example given on how to outline and prepare a message make sense to you? Did you find it helpful? Would you use a format like this if you do not already do so?

10. Have you ever considered asking two or three people to take notes on your sermon during a church service in order to give you feedback on how well you delivered your message? You could ask them whether they felt it was biblically accurate, what the main idea was, what the main points were, if it was applicable, and if it was interesting. Would you be willing to do this?

APPENDIX

APPENDIX:

Baptism: Difficult Passages

The following verses: Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, Romans 6:1-7, Galatians 3:27, Colossians 2:12, and 1 Peter 3:20-21, can be difficult passages to understand as they relate to the topic of baptism. For instance, what did Peter mean when he stated, "baptism now saves you" (1 Pet. 3:21), and "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38)? And what did Ananias mean when he told the Apostle Paul, "Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name" (Acts 22:16)? Does water baptism save a person? Does it offer its recipients a spiritual cleansing of sin as these verses seem to imply with just a superficial rendering? For if it does, then water applied to a person's body by faith becomes the agent of his salvation, and not Christ alone. But, if Christ is the sole means of salvation, then one has to revisit the passages referenced above to look at them more closely, attempting to understand them in their immediate context as well as in the context of the New Testament.

When considering these verses, it is clearly demonstrated in the Bible in many passages that salvation is the result of faith and not works. First, in the book of Acts there are examples of people who were saved and had evidenced salvation before they had been baptized (Acts 10:44-48; 16:29-33; cf. Rom. 8:9). From these examples it is obvious that water baptism was not a necessary aspect in the process of salvation. Baptism did not save them; it followed their salvation. Second, it is also clear in the Bible that it is a person's faith in Christ alone which saves him (cf. Luke 7:50; 23:39-43; Acts 4:12; 16:31; Rom. 10:13; Eph. 2:8-9), and nothing else (cf. Rom. 3:28; 4:1-9; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9); not even water baptism. For it is one's faith in Christ and not one's faith in baptism which justifies (Rom. 3:22,28; 5:1; Gal. 2:16), sanctifies (Acts 26:18; cf. 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11), and makes a person righteous (Rom. 4:5;2 Cor. 5:21; Php. 3:9); not works such as baptism (cf. Rom. 3:20; 7:5; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9). Third, baptism is an act which is done as a confirmation and public profession of a person's newfound faith in Christ (Mat. 28:19; cf. Acts 2:41; 8:12, 35-37; 10:44-48; 16:29-33; 18:8; 19:3-5). It is not done to gain salvation (Eph. 2:8-9). This public profession is important in that it demonstrates a believer's willingness to declare his allegiance to Christ; for if a person will not confess Jesus before men, then Jesus will not confess him before His Father (Mat. 10:32-33). Though this is

the case, one must always remember that it is only a person's faith which saves him and nothing else.

When looking at 1 Peter 3:20-21, the key to understanding this passage properly is the Greek word "*antitupos*" found in this verse. This word is translated differently in various versions of the Bible (i.e., corresponding, antitype, symbolizes, figure). The word "antitype," a literal translation of this Greek word, gives the Bible student a better understanding of the verse in context. The other words can be misleading and do not communicate as precisely the idea of this verse. Therefore, in order to interpret this verse, the reader needs to define what is meant by an "antitype" and its companion word "type."

A type in Scripture is a person, thing or event in the Old Testament which foreshadows or prefigures a future person or event in the New Testament. One example of a type is, "Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come" (Rom. 5:14). How is Adam a type of Christ? When comparing Romans 5:12 to Romans 5:15, the contrast can be easily seen: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned" (5:12), "much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many" (5:15). Where Adam was the type, Jesus was the antitype; the antitype being either a person or event which the type prefigures. Therefore a type in Scripture occurs first, followed by the antitype which is the realization of the type.

Another example of a type and antitype is Isaac and Jesus (Heb. 11:19). Isaac was placed on an alter as a sacrifice by his father Abraham (cf. Heb. 11:17-19) just as Jesus was made a sacrifice by His Father on a cross (1 John 4:9-10). As Abraham received back Isaac (the type; Heb. 11:19), so God the Father received back Jesus (the antitype) through the resurrection (John 20; cf. Acts 1:9-11; Rom. 6:5; Heb. 9:11; 1 Pet. 3:22).

Types/antitypes in Scripture vary in pattern (see the diagram below). In one case the type corresponds directly to the antitype (corresponding type/antitype), yet in another case the type and antitype are opposites (antithetical type/antitype). There is also a case where the type is the perfect, original pattern, and the antitype is an imperfect copy (archetypic type/antitype). And in the last case, the type is something which is similar to the antitype, where a correlation is made between them on the basis of known similarities (analogous type/antitype). Therefore, each type must be looked at separately within its context to be understood properly since not all types and antitypes are identical, nor are to be interpreted the same.

TYPE	ANTITYPE	PASSAGE
Adam: Death reined	Jesus: Life reigned	Rom. 5:14
PATTERN: antithetical type/antitype		
Isaac was offered	Jesus was offered	Heb. 11:17-19
PATTERN: corresponding type/antitype		
Heavenly tabernacle	Earthly tabernacle	Acts. 7:44
PATTERN: archetypic type/antitype		

Waters of the flood Waters of baptism 1 Pet. 3:20-21
PATTERN: analogous type/antitype

In the case of 1 Peter 3:20-21, Peter contrasts baptism, which he states is an antitype, with a type in the preceding verse. Therefore the Bible student must look and accurately determine what the type is which corresponds to the antitype. Looking at verse 20, there are two things listed which could possibly be the type that foreshadowed baptism which Peter is alluding to, those being the ark and the water. To determine which of these two is the type, the Greek grammatical construction of verse 21 is very important because it indicates that the thing which foreshadows baptism is in the neuter gender. Of the two possibilities, the Greek word for "water" is in the neuter, whereas the Greek word for "ark" is in the feminine gender. Therefore in accordance with Peter's illustration, it was the "water" or "the waters of the flood" of Noah which is the type. The question then is, "How could the waters which were sent to destroy the inhabitants of the earth be the very thing which saved Noah and his family?" The answer is that after Noah and his family entered the ark, the flood waters which came lifted the ark and it passengers away from the destruction. Therefore it was the water (type) by means of the ark which saved the people. Corresponding to this type, the antitype of the flood waters -- baptism -- also saves according to verse 21. But how can this be when it is so clear from the Bible that salvation is the result of faith?

Considering the four patterns of types/antitypes in these verses, Peter's type/antitype is analogous in nature. The waters of the flood and the waters of baptism, though not identical, are similar. Because this is the case, when interpreting these verses, baptism must be interpreted as an analogy in relation to the flood which was an historical event. This is important because an analogy is something which is similar to, though not identical with, something else which it is illustrating. Below is a comparison of some of the similarities between Peter's type and its antitype in 1 Peter 3:20-21.

FLOOD	BAPTISM
Water meant death, judgment (Gen. 6:5-7)	Water represents death, judgment (Rom. 6:3-4)
Water was necessary due to sin (Gen. 6:11-12)	Water is necessary due to sin (cf. Acts 2:38)
Water (Gen. 6:17)	Water (cf. Acts 8:36,38)
Noah responded based on faith (Gen. 6:22)	Believers respond based on faith (cf. Acts 2:37-38,41)
Waters sanctified Noah and family (Gen. 7:18-19)	Waters sanctify believers (cf. Rom. 6:5-6)
Water cleansed the earth (Gen. 7:21-23)	Water symbolically cleanses the believer (cf. Acts 2:38)

Noah was saved through the waters (Gen. 8:13-19)	Believers are saved by the waters as an analogy (cf. 1 Pet. 3:21)

One can see from this comparison that the flood of Noah and baptism have many similarities; and this is the reason why Peter chose the flood as a type of baptism. This is also the reason Peter made the statement that baptism saves because it is a picture of what the flood of Noah did when it cleansed the earth of vile things, saving Noah and his family in the process. This too is a picture of what happens when a person accepts Christ -- their sins are washed away and they are saved, which baptism reflects (Acts 2:38), bringing them to a newness of life (Rom. 6:4).

So how then does baptism save? It saves as an analogy. This phrase was never meant to be taken literally, for Peter's readers knew that salvation was not the result of baptism, but the result of faith alone. This fact is stated clearly in the first chapter of Peter's epistle where Peter himself said, "obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet. 1:9). Baptism is not mentioned. Other passages in 1 Peter confirm this as well -- that salvation is by faith in Christ through the Word of God (1 Peter 1:1-5,9,18-19,23; 2:24; 3:18), not as the result of baptism. Another point which further demonstrates this truth is the covenant of circumcision which God gave to Abraham (Gen. 17:9-14). The Jews had begun believing that circumcision saved a person, just as some today teach about baptism. But Paul stated clearly in the book of Romans that it was not the act of circumcision which saved Abraham, it was his faith which saved him. He was circumcised as the result of his faith (Rom. 4:9-12). His act of obedience directly reflected his desire to live righteously before God, and it was by this act that Abraham manifested his faith. This is exactly the case for new converts today when they are baptized. Peter stated in 1 Peter 3:20 that baptism is "an appeal to God for a good conscience" (a better translation of this phrase may be "appealing to God from a good conscience"). So in this act of obedience, the new believer is stating his desire to live righteously and godly, making an appeal to God. Therefore baptism is "not the removal of dirt from the flesh," this referring to the baptismal waters as a cleansing agent for a person's physical body; it is more than that. It is an "appeal" resulting from a change in a person's heart, this being the crucial element (cf. Mat. 23:25-26; Mark 7:14-23). And as Peter stated in verse 21, the salvation that a person receives is made possible through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:3,9; 1 Cor. 15:16-19), not baptism.

The next passage to be considered (Col. 2:9-12) states: "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." Again, the issue at hand is whether verse 12 is talking about water or Spirit baptism.

In analyzing this passage, one needs to look at the continuity of Paul's discourse in which he lists four benefits the believer receives as the result of his salvation and at the moment of his salvation. Each of these actions are something done to the believer either by Jesus or the Father as the text clearly states, but none done by man. Each aspect of what Paul is talking about is spiritual in nature. This is the reason why Paul proclaims in this passage that the man Jesus is God (cf. Php.

2:6), because "He is the head over all rule and authority;" it is He who has the right to do these things. The four actions which Paul lists are: 1) the believer is made complete in Christ (he has received all that is necessary to live for and to serve Him); 2) the believer's flesh (reference to his nature of sin; cf. Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; Rom. 2:28-29) has been circumcised (cut away without hands) by Christ; 3) the believer has been buried with Christ in baptism (positional truth; Rom. 6:3-5); and 4) the believer has been raised up with Christ (positional truth; Rom. 6:3-5) through the believer's faith by the effort of God who raised Jesus from the dead. These four actions become a reality for the believer at the moment of his salvation, and this is the reason why the believer's burial and resurrection spoken of in verse 12 are in the past tense. The believer in Christ, when he is born again and baptized by the Spirit of God into the family of God (1 Cor. 12:13), obtains and experiences these realities as if he has already died and rose again (Rom. 6:6-8; Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 2:20; 3:1). Also, as Paul states in this verse, the believer is buried with Christ in, or by the means of Spirit baptism, "in which"[1] (a reference back to the believer's Spirit baptism) he is also raised, these both resulting from the believer's faith. Therefore because the believer is buried and raised as a result of his faith, this fact also makes it clear that the baptism spoken of in this passage is Spirit and not water baptism.

The next two passages which will be discussed are Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27. These two passages can be analyzed together due to the fact that their grammatical constructions are the same. In Romans 6:3, Paul stated: "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" In Galatians 3:27, he said: "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." In both verses Paul uses the same construction, "who have been baptized into Christ." This is the same construction which is found in 1 Corinthians 12:13, where Paul said: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." The only difference in 1 Corinthians 12:13 is that Paul said, "we were all baptized into one body," instead of "into Christ" as with the other two passages, but these are synonymous connotations (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12,27; Eph. 4:12; Col. 1:24).

It is clear however that in 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul is talking about Spirit baptism. In this verse, Paul says that by one Spirit all believers are baptized into (placed or positioned into) the body (of Christ). It is through this baptism that new believers enter into the body of Christ as each believer is "made to drink of one Spirit." This is not optional or a decision one makes; it is compulsory, being done to each believer without their consent. This obviously is different than water baptism. Consequently this same construction ("baptized into Christ") which is used in the Romans 6 and Galatians 3 passages, is also talking about Spirit baptism, just as is Colossians 2:12. Therefore according to these passages, when a new believer is saved, at the moment of his conversion, he is baptized into the body of Christ and being made to drink of one Spirit. It is at that moment when he is baptized into Christ's death and into His resurrection, being clothed with Christ, he obtains the ability to walk in newness of life.

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[1] The phrase "in which," though it is not present in the Russian Synod Version of the Bible, is present in the Greek text and needs to be taken into account to properly understand this passage (Col. 2:9-12).

In the case of Acts 2:38: "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit," it is obvious that Peter is talking about water baptism. The question is however, was Peter actually saying that repentance in conjunction with the act of water baptism washes away a person's sins, causing the one baptized to be forgiven? If he was stating this, then one has to answer two questions: 1) "Why does Peter say in two other passages in the book of Acts that repentance from sin comes only from Jesus (Acts 5:31; 10:43)?"; and 2) "Why does Peter not mention baptism in these two passages?" The answer is because Peter did not believe or teach that water baptism saves a person. Jesus, and not baptism, is the object of a person's faith which saves him (1 Peter 1:1-5,9,18-19,23; 2:24; 3:18).

Another problem with stating that water baptism results in forgiveness of sins is that no act or ritual can do this. Only God can forgive sins once a person asks Him (cf. Mark 2:7; Psa. 130:4; Isa. 43:25; Dan. 9:9; Mic. 7:18; John 20:20-23). Repentance between God and man is a transaction which can only happen one way -- man asks for forgiveness and God forgives. Since baptism is the symbol of God's forgiveness after repentance is granted, it pictures perfectly the result of a person's salvation -- the sins which God has forgiven being washed away. Therefore Peter was focusing in this verse upon the issue of repentance and not baptism. Peter was telling his audience to repent, and then in response to their repentance, to be baptized "for" or because of the fact that their sins were forgiven. The word "for" is not looking forward to an objective ("the forgiveness of sins"), but it is looking backward to the result of their repentance ("the forgiveness of sins"). This then is the reason why a person is to be baptized, because his sins have been forgiven.

Acts 22:16 is another passage which needs to be considered: "Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." Again, as with Acts 2:38, water is the mode of baptism in this verse. In order to understand this verse, one needs to look at the salvation experience of Paul as recorded in Acts 9:17-19. This passage records: "So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened." This passage is a parallel account of the one in Acts 22.

In Acts 9, Ananias tells Paul that Jesus (whom Paul met on the road to Damascus) had sent him to Paul so that he would regain his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is important to note that at this time in church history, salvation and receiving the Holy Spirit were at times two separate events (cf. Acts 8:12-17; 19:1-7), though not always (cf. Acts 10:44-48). So in Paul's case, he would have first believed, and then secondly received the Holy Spirit. Actually, all indications are that Paul already believed in Jesus, being saved on the road to Damascus. This is demonstrated by the fact that in Acts 22:10 Paul is recorded as saying: "And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.’" The indication that Paul was saved during his encounter with Jesus is that after Jesus identified Himself (vs. 8), Paul called Him Lord and asked Him what He wanted him to do. After Jesus told him what to do, Paul did it in obedience to Him (vss. 10-11).

This would seem to be the result of Paul's salvation, especially when one considers that previously Paul had been persecuting the church (Acts 8:3; 22:7; 26:14). Also, the fact that Paul did not eat or drink for three days after his encounter seems to indicate repentance and remorse (Acts 9:9; cf. 2 Cor. 7:8-10). Therefore, it was after Paul had received the Holy Spirit and regained his sight, that he was baptized (Acts 9:17-18). How does this correspond to Acts 22:16: "Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name."? The phrase, "calling on His name," is an aorist participle which indicates that a past action had been completed.[2] Therefore this verse could correctly be translated: "Now why do you delay? Having called on His name, get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins." Ananias was not calling Paul to salvation by being baptized and believing. To the contrary, Paul already believed, and Ananias simply told Paul to be baptized as a sign that his sins had been washed away due to God's forgiveness because he had previously believed. This is the same message Peter had delivered to his audience in Acts 2:38 after they had believed. Therefore, it is at salvation when the literal, spiritual cleansing of a person's sin occurs (cf. Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:13-14; 1 Pet. 3:18). Salvation then always precedes baptism.

The last passage to be discussed is Mark 16:16, which says: "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." One thing that makes this a difficult verse is that many Bible scholars do not believe that verses 9 through 20 of Chapter 16 were a part of Mark's original text; they were added later by someone else. If they are not Mark's words, then their inspiration and authority are brought into question. Yet because they are a portion of Mark's gospel in many Bible versions, it is prudent to understand them as biblical text.

What then did the author of Mark 16:16 mean when he stated: "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved"? First, it is important to note the last phrase of this verse when attempting to understand the portion in question. There the writer stated, "but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." When considering this phrase, it becomes obvious that the focus of this verse is on what a person believes, not on baptism (there is a contrast between one who believes and one who disbelieves, not between one who is baptized and one who is not baptized). Clearly faith is the issue of this verse. Second, having established previously that it is a person's faith that saves him (Rom. 10:10-11) and not works of the flesh (Eph. 2:8-9), one again needs to view this verse from the perspective that baptism is the confirmation of a person's faith which has already been expressed (Mat. 28:19; cf. Acts 2:41; 8:12, 35-37; 10:44-48; 16:29-33; 18:8; 19:3-5). As stated earlier, this public profession is important because the new believer must declare his allegiance to Christ; for if a person will not profess Jesus before men, then Jesus will not profess him before His Father (Mat. 10:32-33). Although this is an important aspect of baptism, it is still only a person's faith that saves him and nothing else. Therefore, when looking at the whole of Scripture, if Mark did write this verse, it is safe to understand his intention that the demonstration of a person's faith should naturally follow his profession. If a person has believed and confirmed his profession by being baptized, he "shall be saved."

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[2] John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 2:418.

APPENDIX:

Call of God

When does a person know if God has specifically called him to be a pastor-teacher or evangelist (Eph. 4:11)? Listed below are six indicators which a person can consider in determining God's will on this issue:

1. Leading of the Holy Spirit (cf. Psa. 143:10; Acts 13:2; Gal. 5:16)
2. Gifting by the Holy Spirit (teaching, ability to lead others; cf. 1 Cor. 12:7,11; 1 Tim. 4:13-15; 2 Tim. 1:6)
3. Fruit resulting from a person's labor (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-7)
4. A believer's personal desire (cf. Psalm 37:4)
5. Confirmation of others (cf. 2 Cor. 8:22-23)
6. Open or closed doors (cf. Rev. 3:7-8)

All six indicators should be considered together as a unit. No one or two indicators by themselves should be considered exclusively.

1. Leading of the Holy Spirit (cf. Psa. 143:10; Acts 13:2; Gal. 5:16)

The Holy Spirit leads believers in accordance with God‘s will of. Therefore He will lead them to do only those things which God the Father desires them to do. Knowing that God has predetermined good works which He wants each believer to perform (Eph. 2:10; Php. 2:13), the Holy Spirit leads them down predetermined paths. This is why it is important that Christians walk by the Spirit, not carrying out the desires of the flesh. They need to be sure that they are sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading, not grieving (Eph. 4:30) and/or resisting Him (cf. Acts 7:51) thereby quenching Him (1 Thes. 5:19) in their lives. If they are walking by the Spirit, then they can know His leading and God's plan for their lives.

2. Gifting by the Holy Spirit (teaching, ability to lead others; cf. 1 Cor. 12:7,11;13; 1 Tim. 4:13-15; 2 Tim. 1:6)

At salvation the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to believers (1 Cor. 12:7,11;13). This gifting is one indication whether a person is called of God to be a pastor-teacher or evangelist since they must have the essential gift of teaching to do

their work (cf. Eph. 4:11-16). It is also important that they can lead others (cf. 1 Tim. 3:4-5; Acts 20:28) since both of these are leadership positions.

3. Fruit resulting from a person's labor (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-7)

It is good for a person to involve himself in various types of ministries as he begins his service for Christ. By doing this he will be able to see what the results are from his labor in each. In other words, are people blessed by what he does or are they not? Does he enjoy his work, or is it difficult and drudgery for him? A person who is gifted by God and doing the work which God has called him to do should see positive results from his labor (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58; Php. 1:22). Through this he will be able to see what he is gifted to do and what he is not.

4. A believer's personal desire (cf. Psalm 37:4)

When believers delight themselves in the Lord, He will give them the desires of their heart. What is the source of these desires which the believer has? God. Though this may appear to be circular reasoning, it is not. The reason it is not is because when a believer is walking with the Lord, he will desire to do the will of God. Therefore, if God has called him to be a pastor-teacher or elder (Eph. 4:11; cf. Jer. 1:5; Gal. 1:15), it will then be his desire to fulfill that calling. If however he is called to be a pastor-teacher or evangelist and is not walking with the Lord, it may not be his desire to fulfill God's calling (e.g., Jonah). Therefore a person needs to take into account the desires which he has, if of course he is walking with Christ.

5. Confirmation of others (cf. 2 Cor. 8:22-23)

As believers observe each other engaged in ministry, over time they will see indications of what each other is and is not gifted for. Solicited and unsolicited comments about these issues can be beneficial as believers talk about how someone may or may not be gifted, and/or what ministry God may or may not desire him to fulfill. These comments can be an indication of God's plan for this person's direction in life (Pro. 13:10; 19:20; 27:9).

6. Open or closed doors (cf. Rev. 3:7-8)

God is the one who opens doors which no one can shut and who shuts doors which no one can open. When a person is investigating God's call on his life, he needs to walk through the open doors and not try to open the doors which are closed. God will lead the one who is seeking (Jam. 1:5) down the path which He desires him to travel (cf. Pro. 3:5-6; 16:9). One does need to keep in mind that God does not always open a door immediately. If a person does believe that God has called him to be a pastor-teacher or evangelist (resulting from the other indicators above), then he simply needs to be patient and serve where he is at fulfilling the opportunities which present themselves. If the door never does open, then it may not be God's will or maybe there is another issue which needs to be considered first (e.g., sin, lack of experience, lack of maturity, etc.).

If the majority of these indicators point toward or against what a person is pursuing, then he should seriously consider their significance in making his decision.

APPENDIX:

Child Dedication

The dedication of children is a tradition which is practiced by many churches today. In this act, believing parents come before the church with the request that their pastor, together with them, pray for their child, dedicating him to God. In doing this they express two things; first their desire to raise their child for God, and second, their desire that their child always walk with and serve Him. Though child dedication is not commanded in the Bible, it is an honorable tradition because behind it is a honorable intention.

Dedicating things to God has its foundation in the Scriptures. Actually many things were dedicated to God as recorded in the Bible; things such as gifts (Lev. 22:2), money (2 Sam. 8:11), the spoils of war (1 Chron. 26:27), the temple (1 Kings 8:63; Ezra 6:16-17), the tabernacle's sacrificial altar (Num. 7:10), utensils for temple service (1 Kings. 7:51), the wall of Jerusalem (Neh. 12:27), houses (Deut. 20:5), people (Exo. 32:29; Num. 6:2; 18:6) and yes, even children (1 Sam. 1:28, Jud. 13:1-7; Luke 2:21-24). Therefore many things can be dedicated to God. The question is: "What does it mean to dedicate something to God?"

The word "dedicate" means to consecrate, to set something apart. Therefore, when something was dedicated to the Lord, that thing or person was set apart as the Lord's. And doing so had a cost related to it because either something of value was being dedicated (e.g., the temple) and/or utilized in the act of dedication (e.g., many animals). Therefore dedication was a serious matter and one that was to honor God because the item which was dedicated was set apart to Him, no longer to be considered as common or for common use.

In most cases when a child was dedicated, he was given symbolically to the Lord and never left the protective custody of his parents; Samson for example (Jud. 13:1-7; cf. Num. 6:2-8) and Jesus (Luke 2:21-24). Yet at times this act was more than symbolic, and the child was actually given away for God's service, such as Samuel (1 Sam. 1:21-28) and the daughter of Jephthah (Jud. 11:30-40). Yet in both cases the result was the same. The parents dedicating were setting their child apart to God, and the child became His.

When a parent or parents desire to dedicate a child to the Lord, their dedication is twofold: 1) The dedication is a vow that the parent or parents are making to God, and 2) the parent or parents are responsible for carrying out their vow, that of raising a child dedicated to the Lord. These two issues associated with dedication are serious things to God, and therefore those who dedicate their child need to take them seriously as well.

The first issue, the vow parents make to God in the act of dedication; needs to be seriously considered. The following two passages make this clear:

1. Numbers 30:2

   "If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth."

2. Matthew 5:33,37

   “Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.’ But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; and anything beyond these is of evil."

Obviously, God takes vows very seriously since they are a promise to Him. He expects those who make them to do as they have vowed. To vow something and then not do it is sin (cf. Jam. 4:17) and will have consequences for one day all believers will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10).

The second issue, the actual process of raising the dedicated child, also needs to be seriously considered. When a child is given to God as His, the parents are to raise that child as God’s child. And how is a person to raise a dedicated child of God? They are to raise him or her to live holy, to know God, His Son, the teachings of Scripture, and to live out His Word in their lives. These are the things which God would expect.

It should be obvious that the dedication of a child is not just a five-minute ritual that ends once the dedication is over. On the contrary, it is the beginning of a long process which will last many years and take much work. And though in the actual dedication of the child, the parents are declaring their intentions and asking God for His blessing and help in the ensuing process, there will come a day when the parents will have to answer to God for how they raised their child. Therefore dedicating a child ought to be done, not because it is a tradition of the church or because other people want the parents to do this, but because they as the child’s parents desire to do it. This is key, otherwise they may make a halfhearted vow at the urging of others and one day have to answer for why they did not fulfill the vow they made.

APPENDIX:

Church Defined

The word "ekklesia" can be expressed as those who have been "called out" (Greek: "ek," out, and "kaleo," to call). Some understand this word as signifying believers in Christ who are called out by God from amongst unbelievers into an assembly, the church. Though this is theologically correct to say, there seems to be no grammatical or contextual support for this rendering. When Matthew used the word "ekklesia" in Matthew 16:18, he was not introducing a new word into the Greek language. Ekklesia was a word familiar to his audience, though he used it in a new context regarding the followers of Jesus and not in a civil context. Therefore the question is how this word was understood when it was used in Matthew 16:18 and 18:17.

One author stated, "The term ekklesia was in common usage for several hundred years before the Christian era and was used to refer to an assembly of persons constituted by well-defined membership. In general Greek usage it was normally a socio-political entity based upon citizenship in a city-state."[3] Therefore, due to its usage before, during and after the time of Christ, it is accurate to say that ekklesia is simply a group of people who are called out from their homes to an assembly. J. Strong concurs with this definition, for he said that this word describes "a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly...an assembly of the people convened at the public place of the council for the purpose of deliberating."[4] This is further supported by the fact that the word ekklesia is used in the Scriptures to describe a gathering of unbelievers (Acts 19:32,39,41), the nation of Israel (Acts 7:38), and as a "congregation" or “assembly” when talking about believers (Heb. 2:12). Therefore the word was used regarding both believers and unbelievers.

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[3] Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996, c1989). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition) (Vol. 1, Page 125-126). New York: United Bible societies.

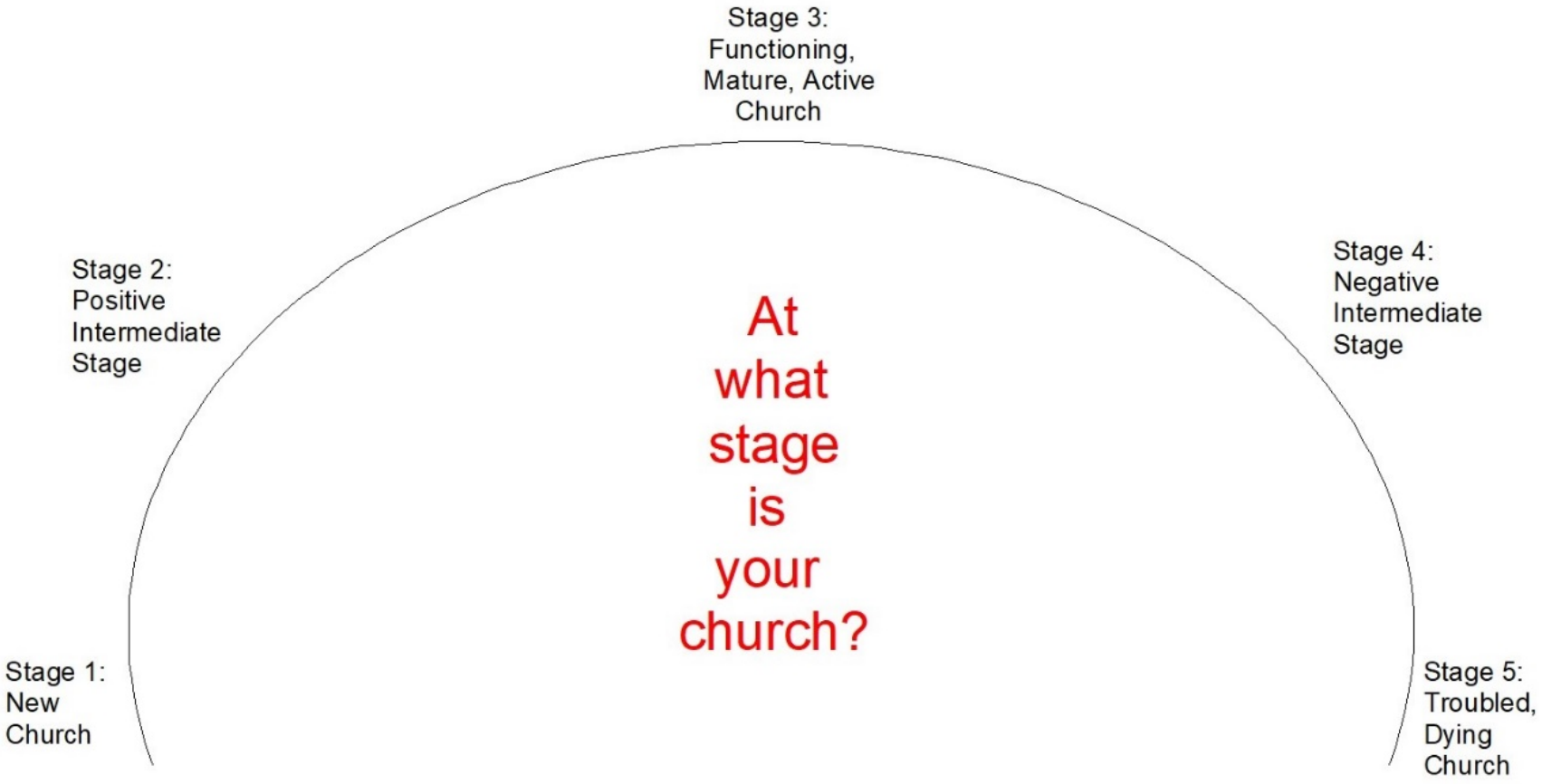
[4] Strong, J. (1996). The exhaustive concordance of the Bible: Showing every word of the test of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order. (electronic ed.) (G1577). Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.

Ekklesia then defines those who are called out of their homes to an assembly. In the context of the local church, it is the redeemed of God through Christ who are called out to assemble or to congregate, this being the body of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:12). This term is also used in the New Testament to describe regional churches (1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:2), churches composed of a specific people group (Rom. 16:4; Col. 4:16), and of the universal church (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor 10:32; Col. 3:15). [The universal church is defined as all true believers (1 Cor. 12:13) throughout the world (1 Cor. 10:32; 15:9) from the time of the crucifixion of Christ until the coming rapture of the church (Eph. 5:23c,25b), this period of time being referred to as the time of the Gentiles (cf. Luke 21:24; Rom. 11:25).] Please note that none of the occurrences of the word "ekklesia" in the Bible are ever used to describe a physical building, only the redeemed people of God through Christ. Because this is true, this makes a sharp distinction between the physical building in which the church meets and the tabernacle and/or temple of Solomon in Old Testament times. God does not dwell within the walls of church buildings as He did within the holy of holies in the tabernacle (cf. Exo. 40:34-35; Lev. 16:2,13) or in the temple of Solomon (cf. 1 Kings 8:11; 2 Chron. 7:1-3; Ezek. 10:18) where the ark of the covenant was located (cf. Exo. 25:22; Num. 7:89). However, He does dwell within Christians during the church age; and it is they who together constitute the church, the body of Christ, the living, holy temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21).

Some terms used in the New Testament to describe the church are: the body (Eph. 3:6; 5:23), the household/house (Eph. 2:19; Heb. 3:6; 1 Pet. 2:5), temple (Eph. 2:21; 1 Cor. 3:16), dwelling (Eph. 2:22), bride (Rev. 19:7; Eph. 5:24-27; "wife" in the Russian Synodal version), field (1 Cor. 3:9; cf. Heb. 6.7-8), holy and royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5-9), chosen race (1 Pet. 2:9), holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9), people of God (1 Pet. 2:9) and flock (Acts 20:28-29; 1 Pet. 5:2-3).

CHURCH LIFE CYCLE

Randy Hillebrand
Dynamic Church of Eurasia



STAGE CHARACTERISTICS

STAGE 1: New church (Acts 2; Acts 11:19-30)

a. New converts through evangelism
b. Baptisms are taking place
c. Sense of awe and wonder at what God is doing in their midst
d. Close fellowship and concern for one another
e. More converts are added to their number
f. The Holy Spirit is actively working

STAGE 2: Positive intermediate stage

a. Believers are being discipled in the faith
b. Leaders are being trained to lead the church
c. New converts are being added
d. The church is growing spiritually and numerically
e. The Holy Spirit is actively working

STAGE 3: Functioning, mature, active church (Acts 13:1-3)

a. Established church leaders in place
b. Multiple ministries taking place
c. Sending out missionaries to begin new churches
d. The Holy Spirit is actively working

STAGE 4: Negative intermediate stage

a. Church is losing its vision of why it exists
b. Priorities are changing from loving and serving Christ to fulfilling personal desires
c. Church is focused inward at its needs and not outward toward the needs of others
d. Reminiscences and talks about the good old days because nothing of any significance is happening
e. The Holy Spirit is being grieved and quenched

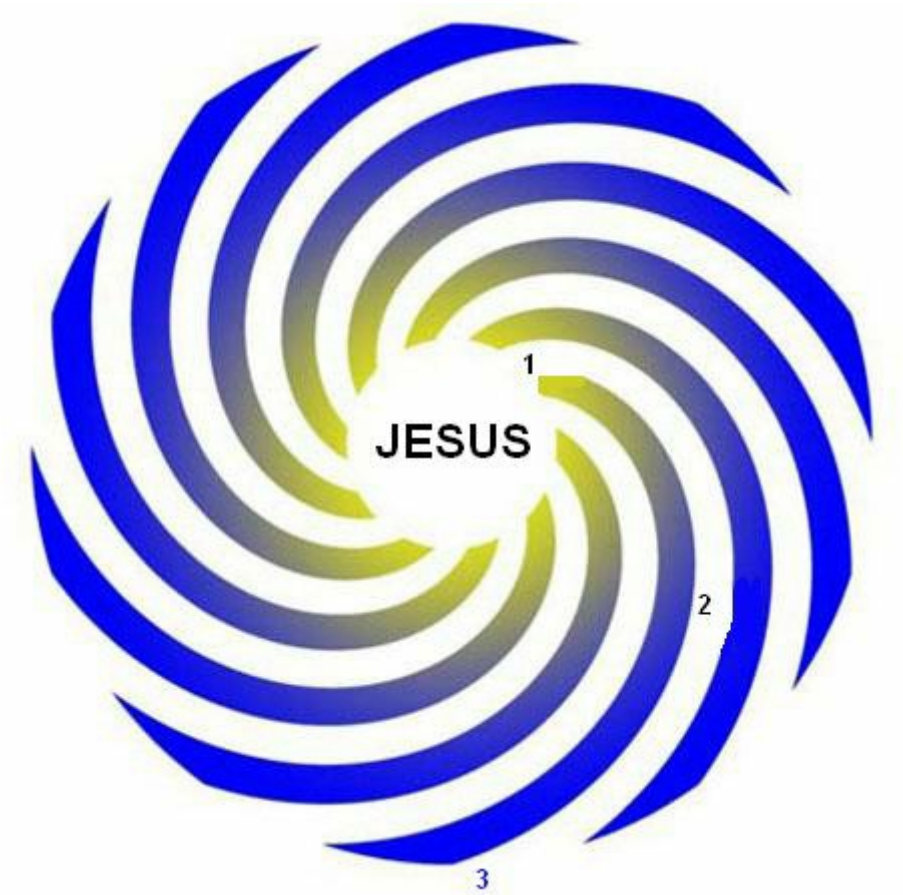
STAGE 5: Troubled, dying church (Rev. 2:1-7; 3:14-22)

a. Busy doing things in the flesh
b. Not loving Christ nor serving Him
c. No fellowship with Christ
d. Close to being disregarded by Christ
e. The Holy Spirit is grieved and quenched

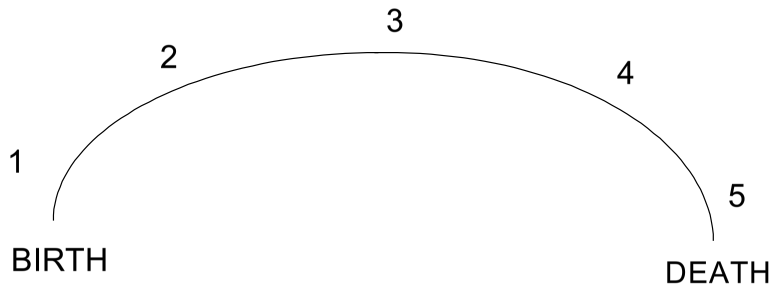
HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR CHURCH ALIVE?

1. All of the characteristics of stages one, two and three must be prevalent in your church once it has reached maturity.
2. Your church needs to continue spawning stage one activity at all times. As this is being accomplished, the new converts which result from this activity need to be eventually moved onto stages two and three.
3. Your church as a whole must work hard at never entering stage 4 (even though some members of your church will eventually enter stages 4 and 5 due to a lack of spiritual growth).

HOW YOUR CHURCH CYCLE SHOULD LOOK



HOW YOUR CHURCH CYCLE SHOULD NOT LOOK



APPENDIX:

Deborah

Often in a discussion of women's roles in the church, Judges 4 is referenced regarding Deborah the prophetess, the only recorded female judge of Israel. Because of her position within Israel as a political leader and prophetess, Deborah is used by some in their attempts to justify women as spiritual leaders in the church, filling the roles of both pastors and elders. Below is an outline with brief comments about this issue. This is not meant to be an in-depth study, only information for your consideration.

Deborah -- Judges 4

A. Deborah was a wife, prophetess and judge -- vss. 4-5

> "Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. She used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment."

She was a wife, prophetess and judge. First, it is important to note that none of these three positions were that of a spiritual leader. As a wife, biblically Deborah was to be the helpmate of her husband and subject to him (Gen. 2:18; 3:16; cf. Eph. 5:22-24). As a prophetess, she was a messenger of God, but never was a prophetess in the Bible a spiritual leader (See article titled, “Women: Keep Silent in the Church.”) Deborah was also a judge. This was a political position and not a spiritual one. Please note as well that a woman being a judge in Israel was not the norm, but an exception. Therefore, to try and justify that women can be spiritual leaders in the church based upon Judges 4, especially in light of 1 Timothy 2:11-15, is a misrepresentation and misuse of the Scriptures.

Why did God make Deborah a judge in Israel? The Scriptures do not specifically state why, though they seem to indicate an answer. The evidence as to why Deborah was a judge of Israel may be seen in the fact that the men of Israel were not willing to do the task. This is demonstrated by the fact that not even Barak, the head of Israel's military, was willing to

lead his men into battle against their oppressors without Deborah at his side. And because of his cowardice, the victory of the battle was given to another woman which was a mark of humiliation to Barak (Jud. 4:9; cf. 5:24-27). It also was a humiliation for Israel because women influencing the nation was considered a sign of weakness (cf. Isa. 3:12). Thus God used a woman to embarrass Barak and Israel, giving her the victory instead of a man. As a note, this is probably the main reason why often women assume the positions which men are called of God to do -- because the men are unwilling to do them.

B. Barak, the commander of the army, was sent by God to go to war -- vss. 6-7

"Now she sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali, and said to him, 'Behold, the LORD, the God of Israel, has commanded, "Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun. I will draw out to you Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his many *troops* to the river Kishon, and I will give him into your hand.'"

Please note that God sent Barak and not Deborah to war. Please note as well that Deborah did not try to usurp Barak's role and authority. She wanted Barak to lead the men into battle as she desired to do things according to what God commanded, having a man be Israel's military leader.

C. Barak was afraid to go without Deborah -- vs. 8

"Then Barak said to her, 'If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.'"

Barak did not have the courage to do what God had commanded him even though God had promised the victory. This shows the dismal state of Israel and the men of Israel at that time.

D. Barak lost his honor to a woman because of his lack of faith -- vs. 9

"She said, 'I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the honor shall not be yours on the journey that you are about to take, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman. Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.'"

Deborah went along with Barak only because he would not have otherwise gone. He, the commander of the army of Israel, was a coward; and if he as the army's commander lacked faith and courage, then one might assume that his soldiers were no braver than he.

E. God gave the honor of the victory to Jael (a woman) -- vs. 21

"But Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and seized a hammer in her hand, and went secretly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went through into the ground; for he was sound asleep and exhausted. So he died." (cf. 5:24-27)

It was a dishonor for Barak not to trust God, so to his shame the victory was given to a woman. Why did this bring shame on him? First Peter 3:7 tells husbands:

> "You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered." (emphasis added)

Scripture is clear that women are created differently than men. They are weaker and created to be a helpmate: "Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him'" (Gen. 2:18; emphasis added). God did not create women to lead men, but to help those who lead.

Does this mean that women do not have the ability to lead? No. There are women who are excellent leaders. Even though this is true, this does not mean that they are to be in positions of leadership which God has forbidden them from holding, such as being a spiritual leader in the church. And though women are not to be in positions of leadership in the church, this does not make them less than men. They simply have a different role to fulfill, one that is also of great importance. As in the Trinity, all three members are equal, though the Son and the Holy Spirit are in subjection to the Father.

Galatians 3:28-29 says:

> "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29]And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise." (emphasis added)

In Christ, all are equal, though the roles and levels of responsibility are different. Therefore, what is important is that believers are obedient to God's Word and fulfill the roles to which He has called them.

APPENDIX:

Hades Defined

The phrase "Gates of Hades" can be an illusive phrase to define. Some have understood this phrase to be a reference to death, while others a reference to the devil and his angels. This article will present this phrase from a different perspective.

To understand the phrase, "Gates of Hades" (a literal translation of the Greek text, not "Gates of Hell" as some versions translate it), one must understand what Hades is and is not. First, Hades is not the same place as hell. Hell is a different place which is also described in the Bible as the "eternal fire" (Mat. 18:8; 25:41; Jude 7) and as the "lake of fire" (Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14,15).[1] Second, hell and not Hades is the place which was prepared for the devil and his angels (Mat. 25:41). It is a place containing pits of darkness where angels are already being held and awaiting judgment (1 Pet. 2:4). Hades, on the other hand, is the place where the unbelieving dead are being kept and awaiting judgment (Matt. 11:23; Luke 10:15; 16:23-24; Rev. 20:13). It is a place for which Jesus holds the keys (Rev. 1:18), having authority over it. Third, the fires of Hades are not eternal like the fires of hell are, unless one sees the fires of hell (which Hades is thrown into) as an extension of Hades (Rev. 20:14). Therefore the usage of the word hell (Mat. 23:33; Mark 9:43-49) looks beyond Hades to eternal judgment; it being the lake of fire, the second death (Rev. 20:14). Fourth, hell and not Hades is the final place where people (Rev. 19:20; 20:13-15; 21:8) and fallen angels (2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 20:10) will together (Rev. 20:10) spend eternity.

The phrase “Gates of Hades” is used only once in the Bible, that being in Matthew 16:18. Though this term is associated with death, it is not another term which means death; or as was stated above, it is not a reference to the second death. One obvious association between death and Hades is that when the unredeemed die, they are placed in Hades. Another association is found in the book

[1] In Matthew 18:8-9, the eternal fires and hell are referred to as the same place. In Matthew 25:41, 2 Peter 2:4 and Revelation 20:10, a correlation is made which establishes the fact that the eternal fire and the lake of fire are the same place. Therefore hell, the eternal fire, and the lake of fire are all referring to the same place.

of Revelation where the words "death" and "Hades" are linked together on three occasions (Rev. 6:8; 20:13; 20:14). However, it is clear from these references in context that they are two separate entities and not one and the same. Whereas Hades refers to a place where the unredeemed reside (cf. Luke 16:23-24), death refers to a state of existence for the unredeemed in contrast to the state of existence of the redeemed, that of life (cf. John 5:24,28-29; 2 Cor. 5:6; Rev. 20:13-14). Therefore, the "Gates of Hades" and death are not the same thing.

The phrase "Gates of Hades" is also not a reference to the devil and his angels, being in a position of power and authority over it. There are no references in Scripture which tie these two together. Actually, the opposite is proposed here since Satan has no power or authority over Hades, only Christ does. It is He who was given authority over all things by His Father (cf. Mat. 11:27; 28:18; Acts 2:36; 1 Cor. 15:27), and it is He who holds the keys to Hades (Rev. 1:18). Therefore, since Jesus is the One who holds the keys, it would logically follow that He decides who will or will not enter the Gates of Hades; for the one who holds the keys is the one who has authority over the thing or place which the key unlocks (cf. Isa. 22:22; Mat. 16:19; Rev. 1:18; 3:7; 9:1; 20:1-3). It is then not Satan who makes decisions about, resides in, or rules over Hades for he has no authority regarding it.

What then does the term "Gates of Hades" refer to? There are ten uses of the word “Hades” in the Greek New Testament. These references describe Hades as a place:

1. where the souls of unbelievers descend to upon death (Mat. 11:23; Luke 10:15)
2. whose gates will not overpower the church of Jesus Christ (Mat. 16:18)
3. of torment by fire for unbelievers (Luke 16:23-24)
4. to which Jesus was not abandoned by the Father upon His death (Acts 2:27,31)
5. to which Jesus holds the keys (Rev. 1:18)
6. which follows death (Rev. 6:8)
7. where the unbelieving dead are kept (Rev. 20:13)
8. which will be thrown into the lake of fire at the final judgment (Rev. 20:14)

From these uses, one can see that Hades is a place of torment and punishment where the souls of the unbelieving dead are kept until the day they are released for judgment before being thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:13). In these verses, it is also clear that the "Gates of Hades" will not overpower the church (Mat. 16:18). The question then is: "What did Jesus mean when He said this?"

The word "gates" as used in the Bible refers to more than just the physical gates of a city. It refers to the entire city and what it contained (cf. Gen. 22:17; 24:60; Exo. 32:26; Deut. 12:12; Lam. 4:12; Rev. 22:11,14). The gates of a city were also a place where important business was transacted (cf. Gen. 23:10-16; Deut. 16:18; Josh 20:4; 17:8; Ruth 4:1-11). Taking these facts into account, the word "gates" would then portray a place of prominence, power and strength. Therefore the "Gates of Hades" refers to Hades as a whole, including all its inhabitants; those being the souls of the dead who are imprisoned there awaiting final judgment. It also is a prominent and powerful place, having authority over not only those who reside there, but also over those who will one day reside there as well. It will overpower all unbelievers.

In reference to the church however, the "Gates of Hades" will never overpower, prevail against or gain control over it to its detriment. Simply put, not one true believer in Jesus Christ will ever enter those gates. Believers are exempt from entering because they are redeemed by the Lamb of God and are in Christ (cf. Rom. 8:1). Through Jesus, Christians have victory over Hades (cf. 1 Cor. 15:54-57; 1 John 5:4). And although Hades was once a place where the souls of both Old Testament believers and unbelievers once resided [believers in Abraham's bosom and unbelievers in a flame of fire (Luke 16:22-26)], only the souls of unbelievers reside there today (cf. 2 Cor. 5:8).

In conclusion, Hades has an innate prominence, power and authority, and is an entity in itself simply due to the fact that these characteristics were given to it at its creation by God. Therefore Hades is not the fortress of Satan, or of death for that matter from which either can launch their attacks against the church.

APPENDIX:

Head Coverings

The topic of head coverings discussed in 1 Corinthians 11 can be difficult to understand. Whereas the Corinthians understood the supracultural and cultural aspects of this issue, some facets of what they understood are obscured from us today. This is what makes this passage difficult to understand and why there are different interpretations regarding it. Therefore, studying to correctly understand the underlying issues is a necessity.

The focus of Paul's exhortations in this passage is why the women of the Corinthian church were supposed to have had their heads covered while praying or prophesying. However, the primary question for many today is whether these commands are cultural or supracultural. In other words, were these practices applicable just during the time of Paul or were they meant to be practiced throughout the Church age.

I. Understanding the passage

As one reads this passage, it is easy to conclude that throughout the Church age women should wear head coverings. The question is however, why do Christian women in many cultures not wear them and why do well-known, conservative and respected theologians state that this practice is not supracultural, but cultural? To better understand the passage, it is best to address this question first.

In this portion of the discussion, two main points will be made which assert that the practice of head coverings in the church was a cultural norm.

First, verse 16 provides the clearest evidence.

> "But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God."

When Paul stated, "we have no other practice (Gk., "synētheia," custom),[2]" he was stating that they had no other custom (accepted mode or manner; e.g., John 18:39; 1 Cor. 8:7). In essence, this word is not describing a supracultural principle (although the supracultural principles of submission and headship are the reason this custom was practiced). Thus, Paul was stating that the church during his time practiced the custom of women covering their heads while praying or prophesying while men did not. These were "traditions" (teachings, vs. 2) which Paul taught them to hold firmly; both being customs and norms of the first century church.

This raises the question, "Could women who were not praying or prophesying during the church service have their heads uncovered? Could they have removed their head coverings during such times as is practiced in some churches today?" The indication is that they could have uncovered their heads as Paul did not specify that they needed to be worn throughout the entire church service. This practice was specific to the acts of praying or prophesying.[3]

Second, when Paul taught why women were to cover their heads, he referenced cultural norms in five verses (vss. 5, 6, 14, 15, 16). Why did he use cultural justifications as reasons to convince them to follow this custom? He could have simply said, "Thus says the word of the Lord." Therefore, in verse 16 when Paul said, "we have no other practice," no other custom, this begs the question, "Could there have been another custom?" Yes, there could have been, but there was not. This was their custom which most closely resembled their accepted cultural norms, that of women wearing head coverings and having long hair while men were not to cover their heads and have short hair. It is interesting to note however that men did not have short hair in all cultures during that time.[4] Jews who had taken the Nazirite vow also had long hair (Num. 6:5).

To give greater insight into the structure of this passage, below is a concise outline with annotations.

Introduction
2 Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.

Foundational statement (Hierarchy)
3 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

Problem defined (Tied to a cultural norm)

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[2] Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc. (Gk., #5311)

[3] The indication from Scripture is that when a woman prophesied in the church, she did not do so before the assembled congregation, but rather privately (cf. 2 Kings 22:14-20; Luke 2:36-38) as women were not to teach men (1 Tim. 2:12) and were to be silent in the church (1 Cor. 14:33-34). In other words, they were not to be in a place of authority, leading or teaching the congregation. Their prophecy seemed to be focused on individuals versus revealing or teaching new doctrine to the church.

[4] "In the earliest times the Greeks wore their hair *kome* (long), and thus Homer constantly calls them *karekomoontes*. This ancient practice was preserved by the Spartans for many centuries. The Spartan boys always had their hair cut quite short (*en chroi keirontes*);[1] but as soon as they reached the age of puberty, they let it grow long. They prided themselves upon their hair…" (Wikipedia. Greco-Roman Hairstyles. 3 July 2020. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greco-Roman_hairstyle. (Accessed 23 September 2020)).

[4] **Every man** who has *something* on his head while praying or prophesying **disgraces** his head.
[5] But **every woman** who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying **disgraces** her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.

Problem addressed (Tied to a cultural norm)
[6] **For if a woman does not cover her head,** let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is **disgraceful** for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head.
[7] **For** a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but **the woman is the glory of man**.
([8] **For** man does not originate from woman, but woman from man;
[9] **for** indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.**)**
(Parentheses added as verses 8 and 9 explain verse 7)

Problem resolved
[10] **Therefore the woman ought to have *a symbol of* authority on her head**, because of the angels.

Equality affirmed
[11] **However**, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.
[12] For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man *has his birth* through the woman; and **all things originate from God.**

Summational Question
[13] Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God *with her head* uncovered?

Additional argument (Tied to a cultural norm)
[14] Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him,
[15] but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering.

Concluding exhortation (This is our "practice" or custom) (Tied to a cultural norm)
[16] But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.

A. Introduction – vs. 2

In Paul's introductory remarks he stated:

> "Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you." (vs. 2)

Since the beginning of this letter Paul had done nothing but correct the Corinthians, which he continued to do in chapters 11-15. Though they were not doing everything perfectly, and though he could not praise them for everything (5:1; 11:17,22), they nonetheless where holding firmly to the traditions which he had taught them. For this he praised them. Please note

that the traditions (Gk., “paradosis” or teachings)[5] referred to here can denote both doctrine (e.g., 1 Cor. 11:23; 15:1,3) and customs (cf. Mat. 15:2) such as head coverings.

B. Foundational statement – vs. 3

In verse 3 Paul begins with the foundational statement of this passage. It provides the justification for why a woman was not to be quarrelsome about wearing a head covering, but instead follow the custom of the churches (vs. 16).

> "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.”

This hierarchy of authority is foundational to Paul’s argument, and Paul will refer back to it within this passage. However, before continuing further, two questions regarding this verse need to be answered. The first is whether this passage is talking about husbands and their wives or men and women in general.

The usage of the Greek words "aner" (man or husband) and "gune" (woman or wife) are determined by context. Regarding this Vanlaningham stated:

> “Man and woman does not refer to “husband” and “wife” (contra the ESV). Paul is speaking of a corporate church setting (vv. 4–5), and husbands and wives do not originate from each other (vv. 8, 11).”[6]

As pointed out, the translation of man and woman are congruent (in harmony) in context.

The second question is, how the word, “head” should be understood in this verse. Does it refer to an authority figure or to origins (vss. 8,12)? If Paul’s point was origins:

- God is the head (origin) of Christ (resulting from the incarnation, vs. 12; Mat. 1:18; Luke 1:35)
- Christ is the head (origin) of every man (resulting from creation, John 1:3,10; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2)
- Man is the head (origin) of the woman (wording from the NIV;[7] resulting from creation, vss. 8,12; Gen. 2:21-23)

If Paul was referring to authority figures:

- God is the head (authority) of Christ (1 Cor. 3:23, 15:28; John 14:28)

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[5] Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc. (Gk., #4142).
[6] Vanlaningham, M. G. (2014). 1 Corinthians. In M. A. Rydelnik & M. Vanlaningham (Eds.), *The Moody Bible Commentary* (pp. 1773–1805). Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.
[7] The NASB translates this portion of 1 Corinthians 11:3 as, “and the man is the head of a woman.” This implies a specific relationship in contrast to a broader framework of the relationship between the male and female genders.

- Christ is the head (authority) of every man (a reference to believing men; 1 Cor. 3:23; 6;15; Rom. 14:7; Gal. 3:29)
- Man is the head (authority) of the woman (wording from the NIV; Gen. 2:20; 3:16; Eph. 5:22-24)

Although Paul does talk about origins in verses 8 and 12, it seems better to understand head as an authority figure which is a common usage in context of Jesus as the head of the Church (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18,19; 2:9). This understanding is also congruent within context, especially when considering that Paul was writing to believers in a church setting. He was not speaking about mankind in general terms, referring to believers and unbelievers as a whole which would be the case if origins were intended. Vanlaningham wrote:

> "It is better to understand head metaphorically as 'one who has authority,' 'leader'[8] … The man is the head of a woman speaks of male leadership and female subordination, in this context, in the Church."[9]

While speaking about men and women, please note that the word gune can refer to "a woman of any age, whether a virgin, or married, or a widow."[10] Thus, this passage applies to single women as well as to married women.

C. Problem defined – vss. 4-5

In verses 4-5 Paul defines the issue which needed to be corrected.

> "Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head. But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved."

Men who covered their heads while praying or prophesying in the church were disrespecting Christ. Women who did not cover their heads while praying or prophesying were disrespecting their head, either a father, a husband and their church's leadership. Acting in this manner resembled a woman who had a shaved head. MacArthur wrote:

> "The Talmud indicates that a Jew considered a woman with a shaved head extremely ugly, and Chrysostom records that women guilty of adultery had their hair shaved off and were marked as prostitutes. Aristophanes even taught that the mother of unworthy children should have her hair shorn…Paul therefore is saying, 'If you are not willing to

[8] "For these and other points, cf. the articles by Wayne Grudem: "Does kephalē ('Head') Mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples," Trinity Journal 6 NS [1985]: 38–59; "The Meaning of kephalē: A Response to Recent Studies," Trinity Journal 11 NS [1990]: 3–72; reprinted as an appendix to Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991] 425–468); "The Meaning of [kephalē] ["Head"]: An Evaluation of New Evidence, Real and Alleged," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society [March 2001]: 25–65)." ibid
[9] Ibid.
[10] Strong, J. (1995). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. Woodside Bible Fellowship (Gk., #1135).

look like a prostitute or a rebellious feminist by cutting off your hair, don't pray or prophesy with your head uncovered either.'"[11]

In other words, such behavior was looked down upon; it was unacceptable and disgraceful.

Therefore, the main problem being addressed was that some women in the Corinthian church were not covering their heads while praying or prophesying. It seems unlikely that there was a problem with men covering their heads, for Paul seems to simply use them as a corresponding example in contrast to the women who were not obeying the church's custom. This is why Paul further elaborated, "for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved."

D. Problem addressed – vss. 6-9

1) Disobedience is disgraceful – vs. 6

> "For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head."

Here Paul elaborates on verse 5. Wearing head coverings should not have been an issue in the church because apparently it was the norm in the Greco-Roman society. In other words, this was something they were accustomed to on a daily basis; thus, their behavior is perplexing. Lowery wrote:

> "It cannot be unequivocally asserted but the preponderance of evidence points toward the public head covering of women as a universal custom in the first century in both Jewish culture ([apocryphal] 3 Maccabees 4:6; Mishnah, Ketuboth 7. 6; Babylonian Talmud, Ketuboth 72a-b) and Greco-Roman culture (Plutarch Moralia 3. 232c; 4. 267b; Apuleius The Golden Ass 11. 10)."[12]

Vanlaningham wrote as well:

> "Respectable women in the first-century Greco-Roman world were always covered in public, and they were to be covered in church as well."[13]

Thus, it was normal for women – both believers and unbelievers -- to wear head coverings in daily life. Consequently, Paul told them that if it was disgraceful for a woman not to cover her head while praying or prophesying, then she might as well follow another disgraceful practice of the time by cutting off her hair or shaving her head.

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[11] MacArthur, J.F.; Head Coverings for Women; https://www.gty.org/library/biblegnas-library/QA0219/head-coverings-for-women, 2020. Accessed 15 September 2020.
[12] Lowery, D. K. (1985). 1 Corinthians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1 Cor. 11:5-6.
[13] Vanlaningham, M. G. (2014). 1 Corinthians. In M. A. Rydelnik & M. Vanlaningham (Eds.), *The Moody Bible Commentary* (pp. 1773–1805). Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.

Paul did not specify why these women were not covering their heads while praying or prophesying. However, the issue may have been that they did not want to be under male authority, wanting the same rights as the men of the church. Therefore, not wishing to show submission, they did not want to wear a symbol of authority on their heads (vs. 10). This is not the only case where Paul had to correct these women regarding such behavior (14:33-35). He also addressed similar issues in Ephesus in his letter to Timothy (1 Tim. 2:9-15).

Please note that this argument is one from culture where Paul addressed the cultural norms of women wearing head coverings in secular culture and the norm of long hair for women.

2) She is the glory of man – vss. 7-9

Paul continues to address the problem in verse 7-9. As he does so he refers back to verse 3.

> **"**For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake."

Since woman was created from man and for man, in his glory, it was disgraceful for her to not show submission to male headship (a father, husband and church leaders) by not covering her head. Likewise, because man was created in the image and glory of God, it was disgraceful for him to cover his head and therefore not show submission to his head, Christ. Therefore, in the church women too were to honor their heads while praying or prophesying.

When considering God's created order, man is the image (Gen. 1:27) and the glory of God (vs. 7). Woman on the other hand, although she is the image of God (Gen. 1:27) is the glory of man, not God (vs. 7). To be in the image of God means that both men and women are a reflection of Him in that they, like Him, have volition, intellect, emotions and character qualities. Regarding God's glory, this refers to His splendor, being both a summation and manifestation of who and all that He is. The fact that man is the glory of God is simply stating that as God's creation, man, an extremely complex and wonderous being, is a representation and manifestation of God's glory. In the same way woman is a representation and manifestation of man's glory, having been created from him.

Being the image and glory of God, man is a direct reflection of the God who created him. God is first and sovereign, having rule and dominion over all things. Man was created first and was given rule and dominion (Gen. 1:28-30; 2:19-20) and headship over his family (Eph. 5:22-24; 6:1-3). Man was made to serve God (cf. Mal. 3:18; 1 Thes. 1:9); thus, he is held accountable directly to Him (cf. Gen. 2:15-17). However woman, who was taken from man, was made for his sake as his helpmate (vs. 9;

Gen. 2:18; 1 Cor. 11:9), was named by him (Gen. 2:23; 3:20) and is under his authority (cf. Gen. 3:16; Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Pet. 3:5-6), being his glory.

E. Problem resolved – vs. 10

As Paul continues, the solution to the problems is stated in verse 10:

> "Therefore, the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels."

The solution was simple; women were to show honor to their heads. As was their custom, women were to have a symbol of authority on their heads while praying or prophesying which Paul adds, “because of the angels.”

The fact that they were to do this because of the angels is interesting. It is important that God’s heavenly host see godly behavior from His children. Therefore, because of the angels, women were to wear head coverings in accordance with the custom of that time as they were a symbol of authority in the church, thus a sign of submission, and ultimately of obedience. Paul did not specify why or how angels were impacted by a woman who did not wear a head covering. However, when women showed their submission to their male headship, this demonstrated submission to authority, that of God, Paul, the church and the woman’s authority figure in her home. This of course is a positive example for the angels who are ministering spirits for believers (Heb. 1:14). Also, it is possible because angels are interested in the gospel and things pertaining to salvation (1 Pet. 1:12), that as they observe believers, they either learn and/or are affected by their examples, maybe even distressed by poor behavior. Thus, angels were another reason why women were to demonstrate submissiveness by wearing a head covering.

F. Equality affirmed – vss. 11-12

Having made his point about woman being the glory of man and created for his sake, Paul makes a clarification. He wants his readers to understand that this does not mean that women are inferior to men. Thus, he wrote in 11-12:

> "**However**, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God.” (emphasis added)

Even though Paul clearly stated the differences between men and women and their roles in God’s created order, these differences are not to be an issue of superiority versus inferiority. Men and women are interdependent. Both originate from God, and as believers, they are one in Christ and heirs of the kingdom (Gal. 3:28-29). Although their roles are different, neither man nor woman is more important than the other.

G. Summational question -- vss. 13

Before concluding, Paul asked a summational question to conclude his argument to this point.

> "Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?"

In answer to this question, the response obviously is, "No! It was not appropriate!" They were to respect and honor their headship. Paul then gives one additional argument before concluding.

H. Additional argument – vss. 14-15

> "Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering."

Here Paul gives his final argument, a cultural argument for why women were to follow this custom. The reason given came from nature, or in other words, "the character or make up of something, as a natural result or condition."[14] In other words, though there is interdependency between men and women, God created them physically different. Women were created to distinguish themselves with long hair and men with short hair. This is their characteristic, their make up, their hair being the natural result of how they were created. These distinctions clearly differentiate one from the other. This is also the case when head coverings were worn by women, there was a differentiation. Thus, Paul's point is that while it is a natural aspect of life for women to have long hair and men short hair, so in the church it is natural for a woman to pray with her head covered and a man not to. Woman was given long hair as a covering to bring her glory. As long hair in Paul's culture honored a woman, so would a head covering in the church.

I. Concluding exhortation -- vs. 16

Paul concludes:

> "But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God."

If the women in the church decided not to listen to what Paul had written and were inclined to be contentious (quarrelsome, argumentative), then there was no other practice (custom) in any of the churches. In other words, there was no other manifestation (symbol) by which the women of the churches at that time demonstrated the supracultural principle of submission and headship while praying or prophesying. This was the custom of all the churches of God, and this practice was not an individual decision, but that of Paul ("we") and the churches.

[14] Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc. (# 5882, L.N. 58.8).

Regarding the modern church Vanlaningham wrote:

> "The question arises: "Should women who participate in a church setting be covered today?" The answer is "No, not unless one's culture expects it" (as in the case of the Amish and conservative Mennonite communities). Respectable women in the first-century Greco-Roman world were always covered in public, and they were to be covered in church as well. Today, if women should be covered in church, then to be consistent they should be covered at all times. How should the passage be applied in a setting where head coverings are not expected? Perhaps the most defensible application is that a woman should dress modestly to avoid the appearance of questionable morality, and in a feminine way as a demonstration of her deference to the male leadership of the church."[15]

Fee also wrote:

> "Although various Christian groups have fostered the practice of some sort of head covering for women in the assembled church, the difficulties with the practice are obvious. For Paul the issue was directly tied to a cultural shame that scarcely prevails in most cultures today."[16]

His point is valid, because in many cultures today a woman who adorns short hair or even a shaved head is not looked down upon, but actually may be considered stylish. In contrast to the time of Paul, it is no longer considered a disgrace. Consequently today, if Paul were to write to a church about the issue of submission to authority and its symbol of authority (vs. 10), depending upon their culture, he would not be able to use this argument. This is because in some cultures the symbol of authority would be something other than a head covering. Paul would then present a completely different argument.

One thought to consider as well is how the spread of the gospel could negatively be impacted in cultures where head coverings are not the cultural norm, yet is practiced within the church. How might this practice hinder women who are unbelievers from investigating Christianity or considering attending church? In some cultures this practice may be viewed as antiquated and Christianity as a faith that is not in touch with the day in which they live. In others it may be seen as a foreign practice which is considered strange along with those who participate in it. Especially in today's world where women in some religions must cover themselves, this similarity may cause some people to feel unnecessarily uncomfortable with believers, thus creating a chasm between them. The goal of the church is to build bridges to unbelievers and not walls that would discourage them from them placing their faith in Christ.

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[15] Vanlaningham, M. G. (2014). 1 Corinthians. In M. A. Rydelnik & M. Vanlaningham (Eds.), *The Moody Bible Commentary* (pp. 1773–1805). Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.
[16] Fee, G. D. (2014). *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. (N. B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, G. D. Fee, & J. B. Green, Eds.) (Revised Edition). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; (1 Corinthians 11:2-6).

II. Understanding the main issue

The arguments given by Paul were the reasons why women in the Corinthian church were to submit to the practice of covering their heads while praying or prophesying. As presented, this practice was a cultural manifestation of a supracultural mandate, that of submission and therefore honoring one's head (authority).

The following five points are presented to help the reader further consider the issue of form -- a method or cultural expression of a supracultural principle. One of the believer's goals is to differentiate between the supracultural principle and its form. When this is not done and form is seen as a supracultural principle, critical attitudes can manifest themselves and division result. This occurs when churches see their form as equivalent to biblical truth, being the only acceptable way to do something. In contrast, when a supracultural principle is the focus, then form can change from church to church and culture to culture. The most important factor will then be that the supracultural principle is obeyed.

A. Man was not made for the law, but the law was made for the sake of man -- Mark 2:23-28

In this passage Jesus reminded the Pharisees about when King David and his companions ate the consecrated bread which only the priests could lawfully eat. Jesus then stated, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." In other words, man was the focus and not the Sabbath. Thus, God implemented the Law for man's sake, not man for the Law's sake. The Law was meant to be man's tutor (Gal. 3:24), not man's taskmaster. Therefore, the customs concerning prayer or prophesying within the church were the practices of Paul's day and not meant to enslave anyone. Instead, they were a way for them to demonstrate their faith and submission.

B. The condition of the heart is most important -- Mark 7:14-23

Jesus taught that it was not what goes into a man (i.e., food) that defiles him, but what comes out of his heart. Therefore, the issue which God is most concerned about is the condition of the heart. The Pharisees did many correct things according to the Law, but their hearts were far from God. Believers today need to focus on the heart as well. Women can cover their heads and yet not be submissive to male authority if their hearts are not right before God.

C. God is honored when things are done for Him out of a loving heart -- Isa. 29:13-14

In the book of Isaiah, the Jews were only giving God lip service because their hearts were far from Him. Their actions were done, not out of a sincere heart and love for God, but as the result of learned tradition. Therefore, being hypocrites, they did not honor God. Believers must make sure that they do all things out of a heart for God and not simply because of traditions.

D. God is honored when things are done because of a correct motive -- Psa. 51:16-17; 1 Sam. 15:22-23

In the Law God required the Jews to offer sacrifices to Him, yet He says in these passages that He did not delight in them. What He delights in is obedience and a broken and contrite heart. If the heart is right, then the sacrifice will follow and God will be pleased. Therefore, when a woman wears a head covering, her intent for doing so must be pure if she expects to please God (Heb. 11:6).

E. The principles behind the Law were of utmost importance -- Deut. 22:9-11; 1 Cor. 9:9-10; 2 Cor. 6:14-17

In 1 Corinthians 9:9-10 Paul wrote:

> "For it is written in the Law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.' God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher *to thresh* in hope of sharing *the crops.*"

Paul used Deuteronomy 25:4 to illustrate that the command about the ox was written for the sake of people, not for the sake of the ox. Through this metaphor Paul specified the real intent of the verse, that like the ox, people should benefit from their labor. What is God's main concern? It is always for His glory and what is best for His children.

The use of head coverings for women and not for men were symbols of an underlying principle. That principle was submission and honor to one's head. Are there other ways that submission and honor can be demonstrated? Yes. Different cultures have different ways to demonstrate this as did the churches in Paul's time. Having a proper heart is of course the first thing that is necessary.

III. Conclusion

Supracultural principles and not cultural forms are the patterns presented in the New Testament. This does not however mean that cultural forms were not important in the Old Testament. They were given to make Israel a distinct nation and therefore were very important. Because Christianity is not specific to any one nation or people group, but is a worldwide faith, supracultural principles are primary, while cultural forms are secondary. If the use of head coverings was mandatory for the worldwide Church today, it would be the only cultural form prescribed in the New Testament for the Church.[17]

[17] Baptism, communion, fellowship, etc. are commanded in the New Testament, however the form they take is never mandated.

APPENDIX:

Idealism and the Slavic Church

Have you ever heard a believer say something like: “I don’t sin any longer;” “No, I never lust after a woman in my heart;” “My husband and I never argue;” or “How could a Christian be disobedient to the Word? That can only be true of an unbeliever.”?

It has been comments like these which have caused me to stand in bewilderment. How can some of my Slavic brothers and sisters in Christ say things like this? Do they understand something about the Christian life which I don’t? Are they living a victorious faith up and beyond what I or others I know have ever experienced? Or have they simply redefined what lust is, what an argument is, what sin is, etc., so that they can say in their hearts that they are pure, godly Christians, and never do these things? In other words are they somehow deceived?

When reading the Bible, I see that Christians do sin, such as in Paul’s confession of his personal weaknesses in Romans 7. It is also evident when he reproves the Ephesians in chapter 4, telling them to no longer walk as the Gentiles, for they did not learn Christ in that way. Paul admonishes the Corinthian believers in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, stating that they were walking like men of flesh. James even calls his readers adulteresses and sinners (Jam. 4:4,8; 5:19-20). So the fact that believers sin is not an unknown phenomenon.

At times when I minister in the Slavic culture, I am cautious not to share too much about my own personal struggles because I may be looked down upon as unspiritual. It makes me wonder if others do not feel the same pressure, both Slavs and non-Slavs alike. Am I just feeling insecure or is there actually a pressure like this in their culture? Are Christians no longer sinners once they come to Christ, or do they still sin even though they have been saved by the grace of God? Do Slavic believers indeed not struggle with sin, or is there something in their Christian culture which causes them to see things from a different perspective?

Before I begin, I want to say that idealism is not just an issue in the Slavic church. Believers anywhere in the world can have the same view of the Christian life; but because I have seen this particular view so often in the Slavic church, this article

will be focused on them. The goal of this article is to help you better understand idealism and its effect upon an individual's faith.

What is idealism?

As I considered this issue, I have come to the conclusion that idealistic thinking is a chief factor why some Slavic believers claim to live an almost sinless or even sinless life. Why? Because idealism looks at life from the perspective that one should and can (focus on the word "can") live according to a set of ideals or standards that are in themselves perfect ("ideal"). I am not questioning that Christianity provides such a set of standards or that a Christian is expected to live according to these standards; this goes without saying. The issue at hand which idealism asserts is that these ideals can be attained on a regular, consistent basis in life. Juxtaposing these views for further clarification, the idealist, while understanding the imperfections of his world, himself, and of life -- especially when illuminated by the standards given by God in the Bible -- is ultimately claiming a form of perfection in an imperfect world.

Therefore, in this article, idealism will refer to a pattern of thinking, a philosophy of life. Because I will be applying this definition to the church within a conservative Christian worldview, my definition will be labeled as "Christian idealism." Christian idealism then is a paradigm of perfection (ideals) which the adherent (idealist) believes is attainable on a daily, consistent basis in the Christian life. The associated question then which this article discusses is: "Can these standards be met every day by every Christian on a regular, consistent basis?" Or putting it another way, "Can Christians live an almost perfect or even perfect Christian life this side of heaven as some claim?"

How is idealism seen in the Slavic church?

When discussing this issue with a Ukrainian pastor he said, "Randy, you do not need to say any more. I know exactly what you are talking about." He then went on to explain how for years in the Ukrainian church what was stressed were the externals, not the individual's walk with God nor his personal time of Bible reading and prayer. "Being at church, dressing right, singing, these things made you a good Christian," he said. A Ukrainian Christian woman said to me about this issue, "How is it that believers can be so concerned about the outside of a person when what God judges is the heart?"

Once when training a group of Ukrainian pastors, while discussing the topic of the pastor's family, I asked the question: "Do pastors and their wives in Ukraine ever argue with each other?" There was silence for a couple of seconds and then their heads began to nod, signifying yes, they do. I then went on to say that one aspect of Ukrainian culture that I do not understand is when Christians seem to imply that they do not sin. In response to this one pastor, while reaching his left hand out as far to the left as he could said, "Here you have sinners." Then stretching his right hand out as far to the right as he could said, "Here you have saints." He then explained that in the Slavic evangelical church you are at one extreme or the other, there is no in-between." After he finished, another pastor stood and said, "Sadly to say, our people

lie. They can stand and look you in the eyes with a smile on their face, but inwardly they may be angry at you and ready to explode."

Actually, the statements made in the introduction that seem to imply perfection in the Christian life are ones I heard personally while talking with Slavic believers. I also recall hearing a pastor say once, "We need to pray for the sinners." Which ones I wonder, those in or outside of the church? Please understand that I am not trying to say that there are no differences between believers and unbelievers. In no way do I want to detract from this glorious truth. Yes, it is true that when a person believes he becomes a child of God, for God at the point of salvation adopts us into His family. Therefore we no longer are children of Satan. We are His! We are saved! We have His Holy Spirit living within us. We are assured of eternal life with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN! So there are major distinctions. Yet, we need to remember that it was only a gift by God's grace that this occurred, referring to our salvation and all that accompanies it. We need to remember that we still have a sin nature. We need to be humble because of our place in the family of God and not proud, not forgetting where we came from, and how we personally fall short of God's standards (Rom. 3:23 states we continue to fall short). This is easy to do when God is our standard of perfection (Mat. 5:48). It becomes difficult when we, others, our traditions or personal ideals become our standard of perfection.

Are idealistic and biblical thinking compatible?

To answer this question we need to see how Christian idealism compares with the Scriptures.

One reason I believe that some may hold to Christian idealism is due to statements made in the epistle of 1 John. Here John wrote: "No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him" (3:6); "the one who practices sin is of the devil" (3:8); and "No one who is born of God practices sin" (3:9). Of course it is imperative that we understand these verses in context of the chapter as well as in context of the epistle. First let's look at 1 John 3:4-9:

4 "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.
5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.
6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.
7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;
8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.
9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

The key word in this passage is "practices." It is clear that those who "practice" sin, in other words, those whose lives are characterized by living sinfully, are "practicing lawlessness." Such people do not know God. Christ came to take away sin (3:5), and those who belong to Him will not "practice" sin because they "abide in" (remain,

continue in obedience to and fellowship with) Him. Those who do not abide in Him have not seen Him or know Him (3:6). Those who "practice" or live a life of righteousness are righteous (3:7), but those who "practice" sin are of the devil (3:8). So the true believer will not "practice" sin because he is born of God and God's seed, God's nature (John 1:13; 2 Pet. 1:4) abides in him (3:9). This is a clear contrast which shows a major distinction between the believer and the unbeliever; the believer being characterized by righteous living and the unbeliever by unrighteous living. However this passage is not a pronouncement concerning if Christians sin or not. Christians still sin; it is just that they should not "practice" sin. Though this passage does not focus on the sin of believers, another passage in this epistle does.

John makes it clear in his first chapter of this epistle that Christians do sin. Two issues which John addresses are:

1. "<u>If we say that we have no sin</u>, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." - vs. 8 (emphasis added; present tense)
2. "<u>If we say that we have not sinned</u>, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." - vs. 10 (emphasis added; perfect tense; a past action)

In verse 8 John gives a warning when he says, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." Please note that John was speaking about himself and his readers in the present tense (verb "have"), not the past. In so doing, he was speaking of their current condition, stating that they sin. As John did in this verse, the genuine believer will admit that he is a sinner; for the one who says that he has no sin, or in other words does not sin, is "deceiving" himself and is not living or speaking in accordance with the truth. Sin is deceptive!

John goes on to say in verse 10, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." Please note John wrote about himself and his readers as a past, completed action (verb "have sinned," perfect tense). What John is saying is that, in contrast to a believer who confesses his sin and consequently receives forgiveness and cleansing (vs. 9; "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."), a believer who denies that he sinned (the focus is on completed acts of sin which collaborates his current condition) makes God out to be a liar. John says that such a believer is not living or speaking in accordance with the truth of God's Word ("the truth is not in us," vs. 8). How does a believer who denies his sin make God a liar? Verse 5 makes it clear that "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." God as light exposes sin (John 3:20). Consequently when God exposes our sin and we deny it, we are asserting that what He showed us is not true, making Him a liar. Yet if we confess our sin (vs. 9), "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (vs. 7, "cleanses" is in present tense, this being an ongoing process). God is "faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (vs. 9). So it is clear from 1 John that Christians sin, even believers such as the Apostle John who included himself in these verses.

There are a number of other passages which show clearly that believers struggle with sin. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, Paul said, "brethren":

- I could not speak to you as to spiritual men;
- I had to speak to you as to men of flesh;

- I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able *to receive it;*
- You are still fleshly;
- For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

Here Paul addresses Christian men whom he describes as resembling unbelievers. Not only did Paul make statements like this, but the writer of Hebrews wrote something very similar in Hebrews 5: "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil" (Heb. 5:12-14). They too were not mature, and as a result acted like infants who needed milk. They were not accustomed "to the word of righteousness," and therefore did not "have their senses trained to discern good and evil."

Ephesians 4:18-19 is another eye-opening passage. Paul begins by describing unbelievers as follows:

> 18 "being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;
> 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness."

What is so interesting is what he said to the Ephesian believers in verses 17, 20 and 21. In verse 17 he said:

> "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind."

This "futility of mind" is what Paul described in verses 18 and 19. This was the manner in which the Ephesian believers were no longer to walk. Why? Because as Paul said in verses 20-21:

> "But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus."

Believers within the Ephesian church were living as they had before becoming Christians; that is, if they had truly accepted Christ at all. It was hard to tell by their behavior if they were believers or unbelievers. It is interesting that this reproof follows Ephesians 4:11-16. Here Paul spoke about the ministry of the apostle, prophet, evangelist and pastor-teacher, that of bringing the members of their churches to spiritual maturity. When this happens, the members of the church will live more and more in Christ-likeness and not like the world.

At this point it has been established that immature believers sin for they are not accustomed to righteousness, but what about mature believers? Do they still sin, or are they immune from sin due to their maturity? Some teach this, sighting verses like 1 Corinthians 2:16 ("For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct

Him? But we have the mind of Christ.") and Galatians 2:20 ("I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.").

It is true that believers have the mind of Christ and that Christ lives within them; but the question is, "Do these truths nullify the fact that Christians have sin natures and still sin?" They definitely are reasons why Christians should not desire to sin or practice sin. But they do not nullify the fact that believers still have a sin nature which battles against their new nature (Rom. 6:6,12; 13:14; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:5-10) and against the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16,24-26). Neither passage states that a believer will or can live a perfect or near perfect life because they have the mind of Christ and because Christ lives within them. Both simply state the fact that as a result of our new life in Christ we have the capacity to live for Christ, something that was not possible before salvation. The question then is, "Can we live an almost sinless life as a mature believer?" Earlier we saw that this is not possible for immature believers, and that even the Apostle John stated that he still sinned. For further verification we will now look at the life of the Apostle Paul in Romans 7, where in his own words he writes about his personal weaknesses. But first we need to establish the context of this passage in order to understand about which period of Paul's life he wrote about. I say this because some believe that in verses 14-25 Paul was speaking about his life before accepting Christ and in other verses about his life after accepting Christ. There are different key factors which determine which period Paul was referring to. In this discussion we will consider three of them.

To establish context, in the first portion of Romans 7, verses 1-13, Paul talks about sin and its relationship to the Law and the negative consequence sin had in a person's life. In this context Paul was speaking about life before Christ. He then makes a transition in verse 14. Whereas he made it clear in the previous context that sin was the culprit which worked through the Law to deceive and kill (vs. 11), he will now show that sin takes opportunity through his flesh (vss. 16-17,20) causing him to do the very things he hates (vs. 15). One difference that Paul makes clear between the Law and himself is that where the Law was spiritual, Paul himself because of his flesh was not spiritual (vs. 14). So where sin worked through both the Law and Paul, he agreed with the Law confessing that it was good (vs. 16).

The first key factor to establish which period of Paul's life he was referring to, before or after salvation, is seen in verse 14. Here Paul said, "For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin." The word "flesh" brings out the idea that Paul in his humanness was "fleshly." In other words Paul, as all believers, had an "old self" which was evil in its nature (cf. Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9). Having this nature of sin resident within him, Paul was simply stating a fact which is true for all mankind. Accompanying this statement, Paul adds the fact that he was "sold into bondage to sin." The word "sold" is important because in Greek it is in the perfect tense meaning that the sale of Paul into the bondage of sin was a completed act which took place in the past. This was a one-time event of which the results remained with him until his death. Romans 3:9 collaborates this truth when it says: "What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin." The phrase "under sin" is the same Greek phrase used in verse 14 ("into sin"). So Paul is simply stating that all people -- Jews and Greeks of which Paul was one -- were "under sin." This is true for all people, for

at our conception we received a nature of sin, and at that point we were "sold into bondage to sin." Therefore this is not a state which changes once a person comes to Christ because he will have this nature until death. This becomes clearer when looking at verse 18; "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not." When Paul says that nothing good dwells in him, he is specific when he says, "that is, in my flesh." Later in verse 21 he said, "I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good." This is something that all believers will admit if they are honest with themselves.

A second key factor in this passage is that when Paul spoke about his dilemma, he did so in the present tense ("I do," "I do not do, "I know," "I want," etc.), not in past tense. Paul's experience was a present reality, not something he was recalling from memory. Paul even used the words "I am" (or its equivalent) eight times in phrases which makes it clear that what he was writing about was what he was facing at the time of his writing. So these verses are not speaking about his experience before accepting Christ, but about his life as a believer, as an Apostle.

A third key factor in this passage is observed in the following phrases which Paul made about himself:

- "But if I do the very thing I do not want *to do"* (vs. 16)
- "for the willing is present in me" (the desire to do good) (vs. 18)
- "For the good that I want" (to do) (vs. 19)
- "But if I am doing the very thing I do not want" (to do) (vs. 20)
- "the one who wants to do good" (his desire) (vs. 21)

The question one must ask is, "Are these the statements of an unbeliever?" The main desire one sees here is Paul wanting to do what is right, what is correct, what is good. A struggle is observed, that between his old and new natures. Paul wanted to do good, but he had this part of his being which constantly fought against him, his flesh. This is seen clearly in the following verses:

- "For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do,* but I am doing the very thing I hate." (vs. 15)
- "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not." (vs. 18)
- "For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want." (vs. 19)
- "I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good." (vs. 21)

Though unbelievers may not like aspects of their behavior, such as a drunkard despising his addiction to alcohol, they generally do not refer to their struggle as "sin" like Paul did. Five times in this passage Paul speaks about sin as the prominent issue (vss. 14,17,20,23,25). Unbelievers will generally speak about "their problem," "their weakness," "their struggle," "their disease," or maybe "their demon," but not about their sin. This is the difference. Paul defined it specifically as his struggle. Therefore in Romans 7:14-25, Paul is speaking about his struggles with sin as a mature Christian, as an Apostle. This is the same problem that all believers struggle

with, immature and mature alike. Actually, even the Apostle Peter and Barnabas had fallen into the sin of hypocrisy for which Paul publically rebuked Peter (Gal. 2:11-14). We see that sin is a universal problem for everyone, even believers.

As a generalization, it is the mature believers like the Apostles Paul and John who are able to recognize their true situation and spiritual state, "who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil" (Heb. 5:14). On the other hand, it is the immature believers who are "not accustomed to the word of righteousness," for they are infants (Heb. 5:13) and do not assess themselves rightly. Such people may think that they do not sin, or that they are perfected in righteousness, when in reality they are not.

I know at this point some might be thinking, "Why are you focusing so much on the fact that believers sin? You are opening the door for Christians to justify living unholy lives." For clarification, this is not my aim. We need to remember that the Scriptures are clear that genuine believers will not live in habitual sin. Not only did we see that earlier in 1 John 3, but Paul said in Romans 6:1-2:

> "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?"

Then later in verses 12-15 Paul said:

> "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!"

Peter made it clear in 1 Peter 2:16:

> *"Act* as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but *use it* as bondslaves of God."

It is apparent that Christians are not to sin. This however does not change the fact that Christians do sin and that believers and unbelievers alike have a sin nature. Yet, the fact remains that believers have been regenerated (John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19;Titus 3:5); they have a new nature (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10); they are clothed with Christ (Gal. 3:27; cf. Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10); and they have the Holy Spirit living within them (John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19) to empower them (Eph. 3:16; 6:10; Col. 1:11). Because this is true, genuine believers will not "practice" sin, but they will "practice" righteousness. This should characterize their life for in so doing they will show their love for God (John 14:21-24; 1 John 5:3).

What characteristics comprise a biblical thinker?

Because idealism and biblical thinking are not compatible, defining those characteristics which comprise a biblical thinker is vital. Therefore to answer this question I contemplated two things: 1) those characteristics which comprise an

effective student of the Bible, and 2) those characteristics needed to properly apply Scripture. How one studies the Scriptures and the qualities necessary to apply them correctly should correlate to how one thinks biblically. As a result, I came up with a list of four characteristics of a biblical thinker:

1. He is critical in his thinking.
2. He is humble before God and His Word.
3. He is honest in his assessment of Scripture.
4. He is effectual in his application of Scripture.

A critical thinker is a person who is careful in his investigation, evaluation and conclusions reached when studying the Word of God. He is a person who analyzes carefully the facts and information before him. He uses whatever resources are available to come to a proper understanding of the issues at hand. He observes, correlates, and reflects. This principle is seen in 2 Timothy 2:15 which states, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." It is evident that the person who handles the Word of God is to "be diligent" (making every effort) to handle (correctly utilize) the Word of God accurately. Therefore when he diligently studies, correctly understands, accurately utilizes, and applies the Word of God, such a person will be approved by Him and not ashamed when he one day stands before Jesus for judgment. So a biblical thinker must be a critical thinker.

Next, the biblical thinker is humble. As James and Peter said, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (Jam. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5). We see this truth in union with the Word of God in James 1:21. Here James wrote, "Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls." In humility we are to "receive" (accept and grasp hold of) the Word of God which was planted in us when we heard it. It is this Word that is able to save people. It is the powerful, perfect, authoritative Word of God. It is this Word of God about which Paul said: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Thus it is the "inspired" Word of God which completes us. Therefore we, as imperfect people, are to humbly welcome and embrace what God has to say to us. Pride will obstruct this process, hindering us from recognizing or admitting our needs, keeping us from receiving God's reproof. This is why one needs to adhere to James' words in the next verse where he said, "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (Jam. 1:22). In humility we are to accept and carry out the instructions of God's Word, not just consider them. This is the result of a humble attitude which a biblical thinker must have.

The biblical thinker also needs to be honest. Continuing on in James 1, verses 23-25: "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does." When a person looks into the Word of God as into a mirror, he must honestly evaluate what he sees and act accordingly. This is wisdom, applying the knowledge

he has. If a believer is not honest with himself, not willing to sincerely consider what he saw and do what God has shown him, then he will not grow or even decline in his spiritual growth. Therefore to be a biblical thinker, a person must be honest with God's Word, not pushing aside truth he is not willing to deal with as irrelevant.

Lastly, looking again at James 1:25, we see that a biblical thinker is an effectual doer. James said, "But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does." In this verse the one who abides by the Word of God and lives it out in his life is an "effectual" doer. In other words, he is one who is occupied with ("effectual") applying ("doer") the Word of God to his life. He sees and then does, this in contrast to the person who is a "forgetful hearer;" not abiding in or applying the Word of God. Effective application is to be the end result of reading, studying, teaching and/or preaching the Word of God. A person with this goal is an effectual, biblical thinker and one who will please and honor God throughout his life.

In summary, a person who thinks biblically and then speaks and acts biblically is a person who is characterized in his thinking as:

- Critical - 2 Tim. 2:15
- Humble - James 1:21-22
- Honest - James 1:23-25
- Effectual - James 1:25

To be without these character qualities can lead believers to various unbiblical paradigms, such as to Christian idealism. This occurs because a believer who is not critical in his thinking will be receptive to many forms of error since he is not accurately handing the Word of truth. This is the main reason for Christian idealism, an incorrect understanding of the Word of God. Though for the most part many Christian idealists desire to live righteously before God, they go about it in an unbiblical manner. Their misunderstanding of the Scriptures leads them to attempt to live a victorious Christian life in the flesh, not by the grace of God. Since living a perfect life is impossible due to our sinful nature, the Christian idealist in his zeal to honor God creates a set of standards that he, in his flesh, is able to achieve. The application of the four characteristics of a biblical thinker however will eliminate Christian idealism as well as other forms of error. (See the chapter on Bible Study Methods. The information in this chapter will help one understand the Scriptures in their appropriate context, helping the Bible student to become a more critical thinker.)

Christian idealism and legalistic behavior in the church

Biblical thinking will not only eliminate Christian idealism, but it will also eliminate the associated legalism apparent in churches where it flourishes. I define legalism in this context as the mindset that believes obedience to a set of insignificant, superficial standards is pleasing to God. This is directly tied to Christian idealism because one aspect of this belief system is attainable rules which give the Christian idealist a sense of godliness when living in accordance with them. Legalism

can also be observed by believers who are characterized by their use of the Bible to authenticate their personal convictions on their opinions, on issues which the Bible speaks nothing about (cf. Rom. 10:2). Linking their personal views to the Bible gives what they say authority.

When considering this issue, I would like to begin with these words King David spoke to God:

> "For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." (Psa. 51:16-17)

A similar thought was made to King Saul in the form of a rebuke:

> "Samuel said, 'Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *and* to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from *being* king.'" (1 Sam. 15:22-23)

Though God demanded animal sacrifices from the Israelites, the prerequisite to His acceptance of them was a humble, broken and obedient heart. God did not render as important external things which the sacrifices became when offered from a heart that was not fully surrendered to Him. Therefore believing that mere obedience to a set of rules done from an improper heart pleases God is misguided. The Pharisees did this, thus Jesus said to them:

> "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." (Mat. 23:23-28)

What a strong rebuke to these unbelieving Pharisees! But do believers ever have such tendencies to focus on the outside of the cup rather than the inside? Do we "neglect the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness" and focus on things that make a person look like a Christian on the outside, though his heart on the inside is not pleasing to God? I believe some do this because it is so much easier to live according to a simple set of man-made rules than work at growing in our faith on a daily basis. Specifically for the Christian idealist, living according to a set of such rules means that he does not have to face the reality of his sin; for in his mind he is a good Christian.

Jesus had even more strong words for the Pharisees and Scribes in a related passage. Mark recorded the following:

> "The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, 'Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?' And He said to them, 'Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men. He was also saying to them, 'You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. For Moses said, "Honor your father and your mother"; and, "He who speaks evil of father or mother, is to be put to death"; but you say, "If a man says to *his* father or *his* mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given *to God),*" you no longer permit him to do anything for *his* father or *his* mother; *thus* invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that." After He called the crowd to Him again, He *began* saying to them, 'Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man." (Mark 7:5-15)

Here Jesus focuses on the main issue -- the heart, not on the externals. The Jews had elevated their traditions above the Law of God, thus invalidating the Word of God. They were honoring God with their lips though their hearts were far from Him. Once a Ukrainian pastor who pastors a church of over 1,000 members said to me: "I have been thinking about no longer preaching messages on the issues of head coverings, makeup, jewelry, how people dress, etc. Instead I believe that I should focus my preaching on changing the hearts of the people; because when hearts change, people change and will do what is right." AMEN! He realized that he needed to work on the inside and not on the outside, no longer trying to make people conform to a set of insignificant rules. This is like a mechanic who, when trying to get a car to run better, paints the outside of the car and does not fix the engine. This is how many church leaders function. Jesus on the other hand wanted to get His listeners to understand that God is not pleased only with the externals and traditions which become more important than the Word of God. It is a man's heart that is the source of everything which he does, the source of all his external behavior. For when the heart is right, the externals will be right as well.

Why do we see Christian idealism in the Slavic church?

I believe the reason we see Christian idealism in the Slavic church, and in other churches around the world, is because of a misunderstanding of grace. Emphatically, all true believers in the former Soviet Union would state that they have been saved by grace. This of course is true, and from what I have seen in practice, this is usually how they live. Yet what I hear them say (though they would probably strongly disagree with me on this point) is that they must maintain their salvation by their works. Why? Because if a believer can lose his salvation, then he must live up to a high standard so he can retain it. Therefore, it is as a result of his works that he keeps his salvation, not by God's grace. Now for some, this portion may be the most difficult to accept, but I ask you to prayerfully consider the following explanation.

Where does this misconception come from and how is it manifested? It is a logical conclusion I believe, that if a person thinks he can lose his salvation, he must then justify in his own mind that he is living a life worthy of retaining it. In other words, how can one admit that he lives an imperfect Christian life when it is his very imperfections that can cause him to lose his salvation? How can one admit that he argues with his wife, that he yells at his children, that he thinks impure thoughts or that he is not always completely honest in all that he says and does? If he believes that he can lose his salvation as a result of his imperfections, then how can he be honest with who he really is before Christ? This means he would have to face up to, look at, and endeavor to have victory over his sin. It is easier to deceive oneself into believing that his life is almost perfect than to do this.

Now I will explain what I believe the Bible teaches on this issue. First, if we are saved by grace, then we retain our salvation by grace. As Ephesians 2:8-9 tell us: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." We have been saved by God's grace through our faith. This was a gift to us, not in any way the result of our works (past, present or future), "so that no one may boast." Please note that the word "saved" in this verse is in the perfect, past tense. What this means is that at some point in the past we were "saved" -- rescued from danger, keep from destruction and its resulting penalties. This is a finished, completed act, and it occurred the moment we believed. We are saved once and for all "for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29; see Rom. 1:6; 8:30; 2 Tim. 1:9).

What are we saved from? The Apostle Paul said in Colossians 2:13, "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us <u>all</u> our transgressions." (emphasis added). Jesus forgave us "all" of our sins, past, present and future. The Apostle John said in 1 John 1:6-7: "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from <u>all</u> sin" (emphasis added). John also said in 1 John 2:12, "I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake." "Your sins" (all of them is implied) have been forgiven. John wrote in Revelation 1 when speaking about Jesus: "To Him who loves us <u>and released us from our sins by His blood</u>— and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (vss. 5b-6, emphasis added). We have been released from our sins by His blood, not by our works. Please notice that the word "released" is an aorist, active participle; therefore it is in the past tense meaning that Jesus has completed this action of releasing us from all our sins. Because it is a finished act, this means that all of our sins have been forgiven, past, present and future. John makes it clear when this occurred -- at the time when Jesus shed His blood on the cross (Col. 1:20; 1 Pet. 3:18).

So how do we understand these verses in contrast to passages like Matthew 6:14-15 and 1 John 1:9? Matthew 6:14-15 says: "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions." First John 1:9 states, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to

cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If our sins are forgiven, then why are we told that we must confess our sins and forgive others in order for our sins to be forgiven? The issue at hand is not salvation; the issue is relationship. Though we are forgiven of all of our sins at salvation, which the passages above clearly show, we still have to reconcile with God and possibly with others for our daily sins. For example, if I purposely offend someone, I have just sinned. That sin was forgiven when I accepted Christ as my Savior. Though that is true, my sin has caused broken fellowship between the person I offended and myself and also between God and myself (cf. Psa. 41:4; 51:4). So I need to ask both for their forgiveness so that the relationships can be restored. So though all of our sins where forgiven at the cross, there still is the daily effects of our sins on ourselves and others. This is why we are to go to those whom we have offended and be reconciled with them (cf. Mat. 5:23-24), why we are to confess our sins (1 John 1:9), and why we are to forgive others an unlimited amount each day (Mat. 18:21-22; cf. Eph. 4:32). Relationships must be restored. Therefore, "if possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" (Rom. 12:18).

Understanding that all of our sins are forgiven, we know that as we received our salvation by grace that we can only retain it by grace. Paul made this so clear in Galatians 3:3 when he said: "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" Of course not! So why do we so often try to live the Christian life according to the flesh and not by the Spirit. We are to "walk by the Spirit" so that we "will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

Peter stated in 1 Peter 1:3-5: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy <u>has caused us to be born again</u> to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to *obtain* an inheritance <u>*which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away</u>, <u>reserved in heaven for you</u>, <u>who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation</u> ready to be revealed in the last time" (emphasis added). Please notice the three points Peter made:

1. Christ is the One who caused us to be born again according to His great mercy (This was His action, not ours. He saved us; we did not save ourselves, so therefore how can we keep ourselves saved? We cannot. Only the Architect and Source of the process can do this. See John 1:13.)
2. Our inheritance is reserved in heaven for us [It is there with our name on it; it is awaiting our arrival. It is imperishable, undefiled and will not fade away. It is guarded, made sure (this verb is in the perfect tense); therefore this is a completed act. It is not there one moment and gone the next because we sin. It will always be awaiting us.]
3. We are protected by God's power for our salvation. (Our salvation will not be lost because God is protecting it now, in the present, always.)

Paul told the Romans, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39). Not even believers who are "created things" can separate themselves from the love of Christ. It is impossibility!

Understanding that we are believers who sin, we do not have to try to make ourselves and others believe that we are living an almost sinless Christian life. We can simply admit that we are sinners saved by grace. We can admit that we are imperfect. We can simply state that it is our goal as imperfect people in an imperfect world to work at pleasing and living for God to the best of our ability in all that we do, though at times we will fail Him. We should never use our frailty and imperfections as an excuse to sin or live an undisciplined life. The Apostle Paul clearly stated: "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" (Rom. 6:1-2). He also said later in chapter 6, "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!" (vs. 15). In Galatians 5:13 Paul said, "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do* not *turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." For the "so-called" believer who lives a life of sin, turning his "freedom into an opportunity for the flesh," one has to wonder if he is even a true believer. Freedom does not have to cause us to fall, though it can. It should be our companion with which we leave behind the bondage of sin and law and freely serve Christ.

Conclusion

We live in an imperfect world with imperfection all around us. If we are honest as Christians, we will admit that we too are imperfect. Christian idealism reaches for or claims perfection, but reality equals imperfection. Even the Scriptures paint a picture of the imperfections of Christians, of both immature and mature alike. Knowing this should be freeing, understanding that as Christians we do not have to portray a perfect life before others. For if we are portraying that we are living a perfect Christian life, then we are living a lie. As a result of this, dishonesty and pride will hinder us in our Christian growth, keeping us from seeking the spiritual help and prayer we need because of not wanting people to think we are spiritually weak and imperfect. The fact remains that we are imperfect. Living the perfect life this side of heaven is not possible because we still have a sin nature. Also, saying that we live a perfect life does not help us relate to unbelievers**.** If they know us, they will see the hypocrisy between the life we claim to live and our reality. We need to be honest with them, admitting that living the Christian life is not easy, that it is a challenge, that we fail at it more times than we want to admit. To tell unbelievers, as some do, that once you accept Jesus all of life's problems will disappear is false advertising. Christians' cars still break down, their marriages struggle, their children at times go wayward, their bills still need to be paid, they lose jobs, and they get sick and die. All one has to do is look at the life of the Apostle Paul to see that the life of a Christian is not easy (2 Cor. 11:23-28; Acts 9-28). Also, those who are living for the Lord face the added spiritual attacks of Satan which makes life more difficult (cf. Eph. 6:11-12; 1 Pet. 5:8-9). We need to be careful that we are honest in our portrayal of the Christian life.

Earlier I stated: "Emphatically, all true believers in the former Soviet Union would state that they have been saved by grace. This of course is true, and from what I have seen in practice, this is usually how they live." Though Christian idealism exists in the Slavic church, I see that the average Slavic Christian lives by grace through faith. Though they may believe they can lose their salvation, I have never met a Christian who believes this who has ever lost it. They always hold on to the

fact that God is merciful, that God loves them, and that they are accepted by Him as His children. This is why I stated earlier that though many believe that they can lose their salvation, I see them live for the most part as if they cannot. They live by grace.

APPENDIX:

Lord's Supper

When Jesus originally spoke the words: "Take, eat; this is My body" (Mat. 26:26), and "...Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant..." (Mat. 26:27-28), was He stating to His disciples that the bread truly had become His body and the wine His blood? No, that was not His point. His disciples would have known in context that when Jesus presented the bread and then the wine, that these were symbols. This is why He tells them to do this; to use these objects in "remembrance" of Him. As Paul stated, this memorial is for the church (1 Cor. 11:18,20; cf. Acts 2:44,46) that is to be observed in His remembrance (1 Cor. 11:24-25), proclaiming His death until He returns (1 Cor. 11:26). Therefore, this is a significant event in the life of the church which should not be taken lightly.

How often then should the church observe this memorial? The New Testament does not specify this. Some churches have communion every time they gather, some weekly, others monthly, some quarterly, while others yearly. Some churches do not practice it at all. Since the Bible does not prescribe a set pattern, it is up to the church to decide how often and in what manner it will observe the Lord's Supper (cf. Acts 2:46; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:26).

Should unbaptized individuals be allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper? The Bible does not state specifically. Yet in Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus told His disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you..." In this command, Jesus states that once a person is saved and then baptized, they are to be taught. One could conclude from this that during this time of teaching, the new believer would be instructed about the Lord's Supper and its significance. If a church followed these words of Jesus, baptizing new converts immediately after they believed, the original question would never be an issue. It becomes an issue when a church only baptizes once a year. In a case like this, a new believer may have to wait a long period of time before being allowed to take part in the communion service. Therefore, it is the author's conviction that a person should be baptized as soon as possible, enabling him to join with his church family in the memorial of the Lord's Supper. (See the article titled "Baptism.")

What should be done with the bread and wine which remains after the communion service? The answer to this question depends upon a person's view of the communion service. If, as some teach, the bread and wine, after being blessed, actually come to contain the body and blood of Christ or become the body and blood of Christ, then this would cause a person to be very careful about what he does with what remains. If however, he views the bread and wine as merely symbols and nothing more, then his actions would be different. In determining this issue, one must realize that the Lord's Supper is a memorial or a remembrance of Christ's death. The words which the pastor or elders pray over the bread and wine do not change them into something other than what they are. Also, it would not be outside of reason to believe that at a love feast, after the communion service had ended, that the bread and wine which remained would be consumed for nourishment. Are the words prayed at a communion service any more holy or powerful than the words prayed at a church gathering over food which is served? No. The only difference is a change in context. In both instances food is being consumed; in one context for the purpose of remembering the death of Jesus, and in the other for group fellowship. Should the food that remains after the fellowship time be handled in a special way because it was prayed over and consumed in the church? No. It could be taken home and eaten later. In the case where wine is used in the communion service, the disposal of it for obvious reasons is prudent (cf. Rom. 14:13-23).

One passage that also needs to be discussed in reference to the Lord's Supper is John 6:26-71. The question is: "Does this passage have anything to do with communion?" The answer is no, because the two passages are not in any way related. In John 6, Jesus was not talking about His coming death, just as He was not talking about eating His flesh or drinking His blood in the communion service. The communion service was instituted the night that Jesus shared His last Passover with His disciples; about a year after the event in John 6. In context, after Jesus had fed about 5,000 men (vs. 10), the result was that they were amazed (vs. 14), wanting to make Him king (vs. 15). They did not want to make Him king because they understood that He was their Messiah (vss. 29-30); at best they viewed Him only as a prophet (vs. 14). They simply wanted to be fed by Him (vss. 26-27). Therefore, Jesus knowing their unbelief (vss. 36, 41-42, 60-64) and ulterior motives, spoke to them metaphorically (vss. 58-52). He did this in a way which would cause them to think about and consider truth (cf. vss. 48-58). He also did this to separate the unbelievers from (cf. vs. 66) the believers (cf. vss. 67-69). It was never Jesus' intention for anyone to become a cannibal and eat His flesh or drink His blood. It was, however, His desire for people to know who He was and is -- the Bread of Life (vs. 48) who came from the Father (vss. 32-33, 35, 57-58). He also wanted them to know that whoever accepted Him completely (all of Him), would receive eternal life (vss. 50-51, 54-58). Whereas this passage is speaking about salvation through Christ metaphorically to all who would believe in Him, the communion service is a commemoration which looks back to His death on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. The two passages, while both related to the issue of salvation, each have a different focus.

APPENDIX:

Missionary Process

ELEMENTS OF THE MISSIONARY PROCESS
From the life of Paul in the book of Acts

I. Salvation Experience -- Acts 9:1-9
   A. Paul's life before salvation -- vss. 1-2
   B. Paul's salvation experience -- vss. 3-9

II. Call of God -- Acts 9:10-19a
   A. Paul receives a messenger from Jesus -- vss. 10-12
   B. Paul's call (inferred) -- vss. 13-19a

III. Training in Preparation -- Acts 9:19b-30
   A. Paul grew in strength and knowledge -- vss. 19b-22
   B. Paul gained wisdom through trials and life's experiences -- vss. 23-30

IV. Ministry Experience -- Acts 11:19-30
   A. Paul was useful in ministry -- vss. 19-26
   B. Paul was trustworthy in ministry -- vss. 27-30

V. Commissioning of the Missionary -- Acts 13:1-3
   A. Paul was set apart for missionary work -- vss. 1-2
   B. Paul was commissioned to missionary service -- vs. 3

VI. Mission Work -- Acts 14:1-7
   A. Paul experienced blessings -- vs. 1
   B. Paul experienced hardships -- vss. 2-6

VII. Reporting About the Work -- Acts 14:24-28
   A. Paul returned to his home church -- vss. 24-26
   B. Paul reported to his home church -- vss. 27-28

APPENDIX:

Mobilizing Members for Evangelism

The amount of desire or lack of it that a Christian has to evangelize the lost is an indicator of his heart for God (cf. Rom. 9:1-3). If he sees a need to reach the lost and acts in response to that need, then he agrees with God's heart which desires none to perish but for all to come to repentance (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9; Ezek. 18:32; 33:11). The same is true for a church. The church which is evangelistic is alive, but the church that does not reach out to the lost is dead. God desires us to reach the lost, going even to the remotest parts of the earth to accomplish this (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Therefore, believers are not to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16), but are to make the most of every opportunity with unbelievers in order to reach them (Col. 4:5-6).

Below are elements related to the gospel which are important for a person to know in order to share his faith.

1. Prerequisite (A clean heart) -- Psa. 51:10-13

   King David, after he repented of his adultery with Bathsheba, asked God to create in him a clean heart and to renew or repair his spirit so that it would remain steadfast, immovable. Implied in this is an endurance David desired for God and the things of God. David then went on and asked God to restore to him the joy which he had experienced at his salvation, and that He would sustain him with a spirit that was willing, willing to do the will of God (implied). As a result of this restoration, David said: "*Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You." Therefore, for David to be used of God, he had to be right with God. And for a believer to be used of God in reaching the lost for Christ, he too must be in a right relationship with God.

2. Task (We are ambassadors for Christ) -- 2 Cor. 5:17-21

   At salvation, a person becomes a new creature in Christ. This transformation (Titus 3:5) makes the person new in how he views, understands and lives life. It also gives him a new nature (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10), "which in the likeness of God has been created in righteous and holiness of the truth" (Eph. 4:24). The old ways no longer dominate the new believer as they once did. This changed life

comes from God who reconciled the new believer to Himself. As a result of this transformation, God then gives each believer the ministry of reconciliation. In this ministry, the believer has been appointed as an ambassador for Christ. His task is to be involved in the process of reconciling the lost to God. He does this by taking and proclaiming the message of his God who sent him. The message is, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them" because "He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (vss. 19, 21). This is God's plan, God's desire.

3. Message (Christ died for our sins and rose again; believe) -- 1 Cor. 15:1-4; John 1:12

   The basic message that the believer needs to take to the lost world is the message which the Apostle Paul delivered to the Corinthians: " Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." Therefore the believer's message is that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again three days later. When a person accepts this message about Christ by faith, he becomes a child of God.

4. Vehicle (Serve others) -- 1 Cor. 9:19; 10:33

   The primary way in which believers are to reach the lost is through serving them. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:19: "For though I am free from all *men,* I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more." Though Paul was not in bondage to any man as a free Roman citizen, he made himself a slave to others that he might win them to Christ. He became their servant. And how did he manifest this principle? By taking into consideration their culture (vss. 20-21), religious world view (vss. 20-21), and their social-economic status (vs. 22). He became as they were in those areas where he could while still remaining under the law of Christ (vs. 21) for the purpose of reaching them for Christ (vs. 23). Paul's philosophy was, "just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the *profit* of the many, so that they may be saved" (1 Cor. 10:33).

5. Agent (The Holy Spirit) -- 1 Cor. 2:14; John 16:7-11

   First Corinthians 2:14 states: "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." Without the work of God in the life of an unbeliever, he cannot come to understand the things of God. To him they are foolishness because they can only be understood by those with spiritual insight. Since the unbeliever does not have this understanding, he needs the work of God the Holy Spirit in his life, which is His ministry in the church age. We see this in the words of Jesus when He said of the Holy Spirit: "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;

concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged." As a result of the work of the Holy Spirit in a man's life, he is able to understand that he is a sinner, that Jesus is the righteous Savior, and that one day judgment will come upon him. Therefore, as a believer witnesses for Christ, he needs to understand that the Holy Spirit is the One whom he must depend upon in this process. Without His work of conviction, the unbeliever will not be able to understand and give his life to Christ. Evangelism is a partnership between the believer and the Holy Spirit, and the believer should approach each evangelistic opportunity with the knowledge that the Holy Spirit is there with him and assisting him.

6. Necessity (Prayer) -- Col. 4:2-4

   The Apostle Paul told the Colossians to devote themselves to prayer, praying for him and his companions, that God would open up a door for them to be able to speak to others about Christ. He also asked them to pray that they would know clearly what they were to say to people as they spoke to them. Therefore, prayer is a very important aspect of the evangelistic endeavor if we expect to have success. It paves the way for Spirit-led and Spirit-directed opportunities to share Christ.

7. Approach (With grace and sensitivity) -- Col. 4:5-6

   Paul also spoke to the Colossians about their approach to evangelism. He explained to them how they were to treat others when speaking to them about Christ. He told them that they were to use wisdom in these encounters, making the most of each opportunity. In so doing, they were to be gracious in how they spoke, in a sense seasoning their words with salt so that their responses to unbelievers would be palatable and not distasteful. This of course does not mean that they were to modify the gospel message to make it more agreeable to the listener so that he would then accept Christ as his Savior. But it is presenting the gospel message in a manner that is kind, understanding, and appropriate to the situation. It is speaking the truth in love, even firmly when necessary, yet in a way that does not turn the listener away because he is speaking with harsh, inconsiderate words. As Paul stated, the believer is to know how to respond to each person to whom he witnesses. This means that the believer is to be sensitive to each person, seasoning what he says so that it is just right for that individual, giving him just enough information and no more.

Salvation Verses to Memorize:

Below are some basic verses that believers should know so that they can witness to others more effectively.

Genesis 1:27	Romans 5:8
John 1:12	Romans 6:23
John 3:16	Romans 10:9-10
John 5:24	Ephesians 2:8-9
John 10:10	Hebrews 9:27

Acts 10:43	1 Peter	3:18
Acts 16:31	1 John	5:11-13
Romans 3:23		

APPENDIX:

Music

I. Purpose of Christian Music:

A. To bring glory to God -- 1 Cor. 10:31
"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

B. For the sake of Jesus -- Col. 3:17
"And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."

II. Attitude of Christian Music:

A. With joy ("Shout joyfully") -- Psa. 95:1
"O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation."

B. From the heart ("break forth") -- Psa. 98:4
"Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; break forth and sing for joy and sing praises."

C. Singing praises ("sing praises") -- Psa. 147:7
"Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; Sing praises to our God on the lyre."

D. Causing believer to worship ("and bowed down and worshipped") -- 2 Chron. 29:30
"Moreover, King Hezekiah and the officials ordered the Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with joy, and bowed down and worshipped."

E. Focusing on proper things -- Phil. 4:8
"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things."

III. Types of Christian Music:

A. Psalms -- Col. 3:16
B. Hymns -- Col. 3:16
C. Spiritual songs -- Col. 3:16

IV. Warning Against Secular Music:

A. Expose it to the light -- Eph. 5:13
"But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light."
B. Do not be taken captive by it -- Col. 2:8
"See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ."

APPENDIX:

Persecution and the church

"For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day."
(2 Tim. 1:12)

I. Theology of persecution
   A. It is to be expected if one lives godly- 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:12-13
   B. It is the result of following Jesus - Mat. 10:21-22; John 15:18-23; 1 John 3:13
      1. Because the world hated Jesus first it hates believers - vs. 18; Mat. 10:21-22; 1 John 3:13
      2. Because the world loves its own it hates those chosen by Jesus - vs. 19
      3. Because the world persecuted Jesus it will persecute believers - vs. 20
      4. Because the world does not know and hates God and Jesus it does these things - vss. 21-23

   C. It is the believer's calling, to suffer for doing what is right - 1 Pet. 2:20-21
   D. It is granted as favor to believers to suffer for the sake of Christ - Php. 1:29-30
   E. It is something believers can enter into confidently - 2 Tim. 1:7-9
      1. Because we do not have a spirit of timidity - vs. 7
      2. Because we have a spirit of power - vs. 7
      3. Because we have a spirit of love - vs. 7
      4. Because we have a spirit of discipline - vs. 7
   F. It has the result of freeing a believer from the lusts of the flesh to live for the will of God - 1 Pet. 4:1-2
   G. It is a sign of a believer's victory in Christ - Rom. 8:37
   H. It is a privilege/blessing - Mat. 5:10-12; Luke 6:22-23; 1 Pet. 4:12-14
      1. Because he belongs to God - Mat. 5:10-11; Luke 6:22; 1 Pet. 4:14
      2. Because his reward in heaven will be great - Mat. 5:12; Luke 6:23
         a. Therefore he should rejoice and be glad - Mat. 5:12; Luke 6:23; 1 Pet. 4:13-14
         b. Therefore he should leap for joy - Luke 6:23; 1 Pet. 4:13-14
   I. It cannot remove a believer from Christ and His love - Rom. 8:35-39
   J. It is a life of faith - Heb. 11:6, 24-40

K. It needs to be a life of discipline - Mark 8:34-35; Rom. 12:12
   1. Taking up one's cross daily - Mark 8:34-35
   2. Persevering in tribulation - Rom. 12:12
L. It is a means of testimony to unbelievers as they observe - Mark 13:9
M. It separates true and false believers - Mark 4:14-17; 8:34-38; 2 Thes. 1:5
   1. False believers will fall away - Mark 4:14-17
   2. False believers Jesus will be ashamed of - Mark 8:35,38
   3. True believers will be willing to suffer and give their lives - Mark 8:34-37; 2 Thes. 1:5
N. It produces perseverance and endurance which clearly shows that a person is a true believer thus deserving of the kingdom of God - 2 Thes. 1:4-5
O. It is a struggle against demonic forces, not people - Eph. 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:26; 1 Pet. 5:8
P. It is the righteous will of God - 1 Pet. 4:19
Q. It results in God Himself perfecting (maturing), confirming (to make a firm decision about), strengthening and establishing (making stable) a believer- 1 Pet. 5:10
R. Its outcome is in God's hands - 2 Tim. 3:10-11; cf. Heb. 11:35-37
   1. He may deliver you - 2 Tim. 3:10-11
   2. He may not deliver you - cf. Heb. 11:35-37

SUMMARY:

Followers of Jesus who live godly can expect to face persecution as their Savior did. The world hated Jesus and does not know the Father, therefore it will hate and persecute Jesus' disciples. Hence, it is the believer's calling to suffer for doing what is right. Yet, though persecution is the result of one's association with Christ, it is also a favor granted to him to suffer for Jesus' sake, for he is following in the steps of his Savior. The results of his suffering are many. A direct result will be that God Himself will perfect (mature), confirm (to make a firm decision about), strengthen and establish (make stable) him in his faith. His persecution will also help free him from the lusts of the flesh so that he can instead in a greater way live for the will of God. Such a person is privileged, blessed and should be glad, rejoicing and leaping for joy because his reward in heaven will be great.

Persecution is also a sign of the believer's victory in Christ. Therefore he can enter into persecution confidently, knowing that from God he was prepared for this, being given a spirit of power, of love, and of discipline, not having a spirit of timidity. This is important because he is constantly in a struggle against demonic forces. This is why his life is to be one of faith and discipline, willingly taking up his cross daily and persevering in persecution. His life will be a testimony before unbelievers as they observe him. It will also be a means by which true believers and false believers will be identified, for true believers will willingly to suffer and give their lives to death for Christ. True believers will also persevere and endure in their sufferings which clearly show that they belong to God and are therefore worthy of the kingdom of God. The false believer on the other hand will fall away and be ashamed of Christ.

Believers facing persecution can know that their suffering is within the righteous will of God. They can also be assured that what they are facing can never remove them from Christ and His love, for in Christ they are secure. They can also know that whatever the result of their persecution (life or death) they and the result is in God's righteous hands.

II. Attitudes/behavior in persecution
   A. Always remember in Whom you have believed and be not ashamed, for He will bring you to Himself one day - 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:18
   B. Believers are to join in the suffering of the gospel according to (in or by) the power of God - 2 Tim. 1:7-8
      1. Because we do not have a spirit of timidity - vs. 7
      2. Because we have a spirit of power - vs. 7
      3. Because we have a spirit of love - vs. 7
      4. Because we have a spirit of discipline - vs. 7
   C. Prepare yourself carefully to suffer in the flesh so you will no longer live for the lusts of the flesh, but for the will of God - 1 Pet. 4:1-2
   D. Believers are to suffer as Christ suffered - 1 Pet. 2:21-23
      1. For when being insulted He did not return insults - vs. 23
      2. For when suffering He made no threats - vs. 23
      3. For He kept entrusting Himself to His Father who judges righteously- vs. 23
   E. Through many tribulations believers must enter the kingdom of God - Acts 14:21-22
   F. Persecution is a sign of a believer's victory in Christ, not a sign that he has been removed from the love of Christ - Rom. 8:35-39
   G. Always remember you are in the midst of wolves (Mat. 10:16a)
   H. Be shrewd and innocent in your behavior (Mat. 10:16b-c)
   I. Beware of men (Mat. 10:17)
   J. Realize that you may be brought before the authorities (Mat. 10:18)
   K. Do not worry when you are before authorities (Mat. 10:19-20)
   L. You are hated by the enemies of Jesus (Mat. 10:21-22)
   M. When being persecuted, flee if you have the chance (Mat. 10:23)
   N. Expect persecution (Mat. 10:24-25)
   O. Do not fear when facing persecution (Mat. 10:26-31)
   P. Do not be alarmed by persecution; your confidence being a sign of destruction of your opponents - Php. 1:28; 1 Pet. 4:12
   Q. With all boldness Christ is to be exalted in your body whether by life or by death - Php. 1:20
   R. The joy of the Holy Spirit can accompany persecution - 1 Thes. 1:6
   S. Be glad, leap for joy, you are blessed, for your reward is great - Luke 6:22-23, 1 Pet. 4:13-14
   T. Go beyond what is expected/normal in your persecution - Mat. 5:39-48; Luke 6:27-36
      1. Do not resist the evil person - Mat. 5:39
      2. Turn the other cheek - Mat. 5:39; Luke 6:29
      3. Give your coat, not just your shirt if they ask - Mat. 5:40; Luke 6:29
      4. Go the extra mile - Mat. 5:41
      5. Give and borrow to those who ask of you expecting nothing in return - Mat. 5:42; Luke 6:30,35
      6. Demand nothing in return from those who take from you - Luke 6:30

7. Love your enemy - Mat. 5:43-48; Luke 6:27,35
8. Pray for those who persecute you - Mat. 5:43-48; Luke 6:28
9. Do good to those who hate you - Luke 6:27,35
10. Bless those who curse you - Luke 6:28
11. Treat others the same way you want them to treat you - Luke 6:31; Mat. 7:12; Gal. 5:14
12. Be like your Heavenly Father and your reward will be great - Luke 6:35-36

U. Treat whose who persecute you with lovingkindness - Rom. 12:14-21
1. Bless them and do not curse them - vs. 14
2. Do not pay back evil with evil; do what is right in the sight of all men - vs. 17
3. Be at peace with them - vs. 18
4. Never take revenge upon them; this is God's responsibility - vs. 19
5. If they are hungry or thirsty, feed them and give them drink; this may result in their repentance - vs. 20
6. Do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good - vs. 21

V. Do not repay evil for evil, seeking after that which is good for all people - 1 Thes. 5:15

W. God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him -- Rom. 8:28

X. Persecution is not to result in fear or a discontinuation of ministry - Acts 4:1-3,18-20,31; 5:27-42; 1 Pet. 3:14; Rev. 2:10
1. One must listen to God rather than man - Acts 4:18-20; 5:29
2. Boldness in ministry is the result of being filled with the Holy Spirit - Acts 4:31
3. The result of obeying God may be persecution - Acts 5:40
4. One needs to rejoice in his persecution, being considered worthy to suffer - Acts 5:41
5. Even when persecution looms, ministry must continue - Acts 4:18-20; 5:29,42
6. One is not to fear persecution - 1 Pet. 3:14; cf. Rev. 2:10

Y. If one denies Christ, Christ will also deny him - 2 Tim. 2:12

Z. Do not be ashamed, instead glorify God - 1 Pet. 4:16

AA. Persevere and be strong in faith - 2 Thes. 1:3-4

BB. God will judge those who afflict you - 2 Thes. 1:6-10

CC. Resist and stand firm in your faith against the devil who desires to devour you - 1 Pet. 5:8-9

DD. There may be times that a person needs to flee persecution - Acts 9:29-30; 11:19; 17:4-10, 13-14

SUMMARY:

As believers face persecution, they must always remember that Jesus has sent them out into the midst of wolves. Therefore they will be hated by His enemies and should expect persecution. As a result they may be taken before the authorities. However they are not to fear or be concerned about what they will say. Though they should beware of men and can flee if the opportunity arises, they are to be willing to enter into the persecution, not having a spirit of timidity, but one of power, of love, and of discipline. They are also to enter it carefully, being shrewd and innocent in their behavior, prepared to suffer in the flesh, for such preparation will result in their no longer living for the lusts of the

flesh, but for the will of God. As they suffer they are to suffer as Christ suffered; when insulted He did not return insults, when suffering He made no threats, for He kept entrusting Himself to His Father who judges righteously. For through many tribulations believers must enter the kingdom of God. Though this is the case, believers do not need to be alarmed by persecution, for in actuality their confidence is a sign of destruction of their opponents. It is also a sign of a believer's victory in Christ, not a sign that he has been removed from the love of Christ. So in boldness let Christ be exalted in your body whether by life or by death. This should bring you the joy of the Holy Spirit. Therefore be glad, leap for joy, for you are blessed, for your reward will be great. Know in Whom you have believed and be convinced that Jesus is able to guard your salvation which you have entrusted to Him until that day He brings you safely to His heavenly kingdom, then for this reason you can suffer for Christ and not be ashamed.

When being persecuted, the response of the believer is to go up and beyond what is humanly logical or normal. Jesus taught not to resist the evil person, to turn the other cheek, to go the extra mile. You are to give to them, demanding nothing in return. Yet you are to love, pray for, bless and do good to those who persecute you, treating them the way you want to be treated. You are not to take revenge or pay back evil for evil, but instead feed them if they are hungry and give water to them if they are thirsty. Such behavior reflects the character of God, and for it your reward will be great, for God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him

Persecution is not a reason to discontinue ministry. On the contrary, it is a result of fear which the believer is not to have. If one denies Christ, Christ will also deny him, so we should never be ashamed of Christ, but instead are to glorify God. Therefore persevere and be strong in faith, resisting and standing against the devil who desires to devour you. Be assured as well that one day God will judge those who afflicted you. Also, if God so leads, remember that there may be those times (as in the life of the Apostle Paul) when you can flee persecution. God will direct in each situation.

III. Focus of the believer in persecution
- A. On the Father
  1. On entrusting your soul to a faithful Creator - 2 Cor. 1:9-10, 1 Pet. 4:19
  2. On the hope and strength which come from Him - 2 Tim. 4:16-18
  3. On the power which comes from Him - 2 Cor. 4:7,8-12; Eph. 6:10
  4. On His grace which is sufficient in our weakness - 2 Cor. 12:9-10
  5. On wearing His armor daily which is crucial - Eph. 6:11-17
  6. On glorifying Him - 1 Pet. 4:16
  7. On eternity (life with God and all that it contains) - Heb. 10:34,36
- B. On Christ
  1. On living and reigning with Him one day - 2 Tim. 2:8-13,26; 4:18
  2. On His comings - Heb. 10:37, 1 Pet. 4:13-14
     - a. When He comes for believers at the rapture of the church - Heb. 10:37
     - b. When He is revealed at His second coming - 1 Pet. 4:13-14
  3. On His sufferings for believers - Heb. 12:3, 1 Pet. 2:18-24
  4. On sanctifying Him as Lord in one's heart - 1 Pet. 3:14-15
  5. On being faithful to Jesus (Mat. 10:32-33)
  6. On loving Jesus above all others (Mat. 10:34-39)

C. On the Word of God -- 2 Tim. 3:10-17
   1. On continuing following those things you learned and are convinced of - vss. 14-15
   2. On remembering that it is inspired and profitable in your life and ministry - vss. 16-17
D. On prayer
   1. Praying for boldness - cf. Acts 4:31
   2. Praying for your enemies - Mat. 5:43-48; Luke 6:27-28
      a. Then you will be like your Heavenly Father who loves and blesses the righteous and unrighteous - Mat. 5:45
      b. Then you will be mature (holy) like your Heavenly Father - Mat. 5:48
   3. Praying for your enemies' forgiveness - cf. Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60
   4. Others pray for your deliverance -- 2 Cor. 1:11; Php. 1:19; cf. Acts 12:5
   5. In your suffering pray; in your cheerfulness sing praises - Jam. 5:13
   6. "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" - 1 Thes. 5:16-18
E. On persevering and being faithful - 2 Thes. 1:3-4; Heb. 10:36-39; 11:6,24-27,35-40; 1 Pet. 5:9
F. On enduring all things for the salvation of others - 2 Tim. 2:8-10
G. On comforting others in their afflictions resulting from God's comfort to you - 2 Cor. 1:3-5
H. On your brothers in the world who are experiencing the same sufferings; therefore resist the devil and stand firm in your faith - 1 Pet. 5:9
I. On the fact that those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame and one day judged - 1 Pet. 3:16; 2 Thes. 1:6-10
J. On the reward awaiting you - Luke 6:22-23,35; 2 Tim. 2:11-12; Heb. 10:34,36; Rev. 2:10

SUMMARY:

When in the midst of persecution, believers can focus on different things, some that are helpful and others that are not, such as fear and worry. As believers, our focus needs to be on the Father, the Son, on the Word of God and on prayer. We need to entrust ourselves to the Father from whom our hope and strength find their source. From Him we receive our power and grace in times of weakness. It is He who supplies us with a full armor for protection from the evil one with whom we battle. In the midst of persecution we need to focus on glorifying Him and on eternity which we will spend with Him.

During this time we also need to focus on Christ. We need to remember that one day we will live and reign with Him, that He is coming for His body the church. After this He will return at His second coming. The Christ who suffered for us is victorious; therefore as we consider His sufferings, we are to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts.

The Word of God is crucial for the believer, and it brings special help in times of suffering. Therefore we are to remember that it is God's inspired Word which is profitable, something that the believer should follow and obey. Prayer is also of great importance, for the believer needs to pray for boldness and help in times of persecution. It is also important that others pray for him and his deliverance as

well. He is to pray for his enemies, while rejoicing and giving thanks in all things, for this is God's desire.

The suffering believer needs to focus on persevering and being faithful in his persecution. He also needs to focus on the salvation of others, thus enduring for their sake. He should focus on the comfort with which he can comfort others in their affliction, resulting from the comfort he receives in his own suffering. Considering too his Christian brothers who are in the world who are experiencing the same sufferings, he can then focus on their struggles, which will strengthen him to resist the devil and stand firm in his faith. He can take comfort in the fact that those who revile his good behavior in Christ will suffer and be put to shame for it one day. Lastly, he can focus on the reward awaiting him.

IV. Encouragement in persecution
   A. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" - Mat. 5:4
   B. In your sufferings for Christ you are blessed - 1Pet. 4:12-14
   C. In the world you have tribulation, but Christ has overcome the world - John 16:33
   D. Your momentary affliction is producing for you an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison - 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Rom. 8:18
   E. God is the God of mercies and all comfort -- 2 Cor. 1:3-5
      1. God comforts you in your afflictions so you can comfort others in theirs - vs. 4
      2. As your sufferings in Christ are abundant, so also the comfort of Christ is abundant - vs. 5
   F. Remember that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful, so endure as Job and the prophets did for you will be blessed - Jam. 5:10-11
   G. "God has not destined you for wrath, but for obtaining salvation," therefore "encourage one another and build up one another" - 1 Thes. 5:9-11
   H. Favor has been given to you by Christ to suffer for Him - 1 Php. 1:29
   I. "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect (mature), confirm (will firmly decide about you), strengthen and establish you (make you stable)" - 1 Pet. 5:10
   J. "You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near" - Jam. 5:8
   K. Those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame and one day judged - 1 Pet. 3:16; 2 Thes. 1:6-10
   L. God is sovereign and you are ultimately in His hands, not Satan's
      1. He is sovereign and rules over all things - I Chr. 29:11-13
      2. He does according to His will without hindrance from anyone - Dan. 4:35
      3. His purpose and good pleasure will come to pass - Isa. 46:9-10
      4. He reigns over all things from heaven - Isa. 66:1-2
      5. He is our confidence, thus one can sleep in peace and not fear the onslaught of the wicked when it comes - Pro. 3:24-26
   M. God is omnipresent
      1. He is not far from us - Acts 17:27
      2. He is always with us wherever we are - Psa. 139:7-12
      3. He is with us even in the valley of the shadow of death - Psa. 23:4
      4. He hears the cries of the afflicted - Psa. 22:24
      5. He watches His own to strongly support them -- II Chron. 16:9

6. He is our refuge, so we need not fear - Psa. 46:1-3
7. He is with us and goes before us, so we need not fear - Josh. 1:9; Isa. 41:10; Duet. 31:8

N. God is omniscient
1. He knows those who are His own - II Tim. 2:19
2. He knows our desires and groans - Psa. 38:9
3. He knows our sorrows - Exo. 3:7-8
4. He knows our righteous ways - II Kings 20:3; Psa. 1:6
5. He knows things before they happen - Isa. 42:9
6. He knows when the sparrow falls - Luke 12:6
7. He knows our every need - Mat. 6:25-34
8. He knows all about us - Psa. 139:1-4
   a) He has searched us and knows us-- vs. 1
   b) He knows our every action - vs. 2
   c) He understands our every thought - vs. 2
   d) He is intimately aware of our daily activities, either awake or asleep - vs. 3
   e) He knows our unspoken words - vs. 4

O. God is omnipotent
1. He is God Almighty - Gen. 17:1
2. His greatness is unsearchable - Psa. 145:3
3. He is the God of the impossible - Luke 1:37; Mat. 19:26
4. He can do everything (good) - Job 42:2
5. He finds nothing too difficult - Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17,27
6. He is the God of power - Psa. 62:11
7. He alone is the God of wonders - Psa. 136:4
8. He will accomplish His purpose and good pleasure - Isa. 46:10
9. He works all things after the counsel of His will - Eph. 1:11
10. He carries out His plans - Isa. 14:24
11. He does whatever He pleases - Psa. 135:6
12. He is like no other - Jer. 10:6-7
13. His decrees cannot be overthrown - Acts 5:39
14. He works all things according to His will - Eph. 1:11
15. He is able to deliver His promises - Rom. 4:21
16. He can do all things beyond what we ask of Him - Eph. 3:20
17. He protects and keeps us for salvation - I Pet. 1:5; John 10:29

SUMMARY:

Such things as hope and encouragement are important during persecution. As the writer of Hebrews said, “But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” Therefore it is helpful to be reminded that, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Mat. 5:4). Or to remember that those who suffer for Christ are blessed, and that though there are many tribulations in the world, Christ has overcome the world.

Though the persecutions one faces do not generally seem momentary in comparison to what awaits the believer who suffered them in eternity, they are nothing. God is a God of mercy and all comfort, so when your afflictions are abundant in Christ your comfort is abundant as well. So since God is full of

compassion and is merciful, when you endure as Job and the prophets did, you will be blessed. “For God has not destined you for wrath, but for obtaining salvation,” therefore you can be encouraged by this and “encourage one another and build up one another” with these truths. For favor has been given to you by Christ to suffer for Him, and after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you.” So “you too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.”

One other aspect of encouragement in persecution is knowing who our God is. Remembering that God is sovereign, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent can bring great peace and hope. For we serve a God who rules over all things, who does according to His will without hindrance from anyone. His purpose and good pleasure will come to pass because He reigns over all things from heaven. God is our confidence, thus one can sleep in peace and not fear the onslaught of the wicked when it comes. Remembering too that our Heavenly Father is not far from us, is always with us wherever we are, even in the valley of the shadow of death is comforting. Knowing as well that He hears the cries of the afflicted, that He watches His own to strongly support them brings hope for He is our refuge. He is always with us and goes before us, so we need not fear.

It also brings encouragement when we realize afresh that the God who knows when the sparrow falls knows our every need. He knows all about us for He has searched us and knows us, our every action, our every thought, being intimately aware of our daily activities. We serve an Almighty God who is a God of the impossible. For Him there is nothing too difficult, for He is the God of power and wonders. He is like no other. His decrees cannot be overthrown for He works all things according to His will. He even protects and keeps us for the day of salvation and will one day bring to judgment those who shame and afflict us. What an awesome God we serve!

V. Results of persecution
   A. The continued progress of the gospel - Php. 1:12-13
   B. Growing in trust in the Lord because of your positive example - Php. 1:14
   C. Having more courage to speak the Word without fear because of your positive example - Php. 1:14
   D. Knowing that God Himself will perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you in your faith- 1 Pet. 5:10
   E. The great reward awaiting those who faced persecution - Luke 6:22-23,35; 2 Tim. 2:11-12; Heb. 10:34,36
   F. Knowing that those faithful unto death will receive the crown of life - Rev. 2:10
   G. Knowing that those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame - 1 Pet. 3:16

SUMMARY:

There are positive results which come from persecution. One is the continuing progress of the gospel. Persecution does not hinder the gospel, but it strengthens and fosters it. If countries want to hinder the gospel, they should

simply give freedom and prosperity to the believers. Another result of persecution is that it can cause believers who watch other believers suffer for their faith to grow in their trust in the Lord, thus having more courage to speak the Word of God without fear. God also promises those who suffer that He will perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish them in their faith, resulting in a more Christ-like character.

Another result of persecution is a great reward for those who face it, for those who are faithful unto death will receive the crown of life. On the other hand, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

VI. Lessons about persecution from the book of Acts

A. Peter and John arrested - Acts 4:1-37

1. Peter answered the Jewish leader, being filled with the Holy Spirit - vs. 8
2. Peter proclaimed Jesus to them (with boldness) - vss. 10-13
3. The Jews warned them to no longer speak in the name of Jesus - vss. 17-18
4. Peter and John told them that they could not stop speaking about Jesus - vss. 19-20
5. The Jews threatened them again not to speak in the name of Jesus and then let them go free - vs. 21
6. Peter and John reported these things to their companions which caused them to praise God - vss. 23-28
7. This group of believers then asked God to take note of the threats made against them and to grant them the ability to speak with confidence - vss. 29-30
8. After they prayed they were filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the Word of God, filled with the Holy Spirit and with boldness - vs. 31

B. Twelve arrested and flogged - Acts 5:17-42

1. The Apostles were arrested for speaking about Jesus - vss. 17-18
2. While in jail during the night, an angel of God miraculously released them and told them to go and preach in the temple, which they did - vss. 19-21
3. The Apostles were recaptured and brought before the Jewish council -- vss. 22-27
4. The Jews reminded them that they were told to no longer speak in the name of Jesus - vs. 28
5. Peter responded by telling the Jews that they must obey God rather than men - vs. 29
6. Peter went on to rebuke the Jewish leaders, making three major points -- vss. 30-32
   a. Jesus whom they crucified, God raised from the dead - vs. 30
   b. Jesus is exalted as Prince and Savior to grant repentance for sins - vs. 31
   c. The Apostles obey God and therefore have the Holy Spirit and are witness of these things - vs. 32
7. Though the Jews wanted to kill the Apostles for what they said, they did not - vss. 33-39
8. The Jews had the Apostles flogged and again warned them not to speak in the name of Jesus - vs. 40

9. The Apostles left and rejoiced for being considered worthy to suffer shame for Jesus - vs. 41
10. The Apostles continued to teach and preach Jesus publically in the temple and from house to house - vs. 42

C. Stoning of Stephen and the resulting persecution - Acts 6:8-8:4
1. Stephen was taken into custody by the Jews, and false witnesses testified against him - 6:8-15
2. Stephen spoke to the council about Israel's history of unfaithfulness (not defending himself), but speaking instead of Israel's rejection of God and those He sent as messengers to Israel - 7:1-53
3. Stephen then looked into heaven and saw Jesus standing at God's right hand - 7:54-56
4. Stephen was taken out and stoned to death - 7:57-58
5. Stephen asked for the forgiveness of those who stoned him as he was being put to death - 7:59-60
6. One result of this was that a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem - 8:1-3; 9:1-2
7. Another result was that as many fled the persecution, the Word of God spread as well - 8:4

D. James killed, Peter jailed and miraculously released - Acts 12:1-19
1. Herod the king arrested some believers to mistreat them - vs. 1
2. James the brother of John was killed as a result of this persecution - vs. 2
3. Peter was arrested when Herod saw his actions had pleased the Jews - vss. 3-4
4. Many people prayed for Peter's release - vs. 5
5. God delivered Peter from prison - vss. 6-11
6. The people who prayed for Peter could not believe that God had actually rescued him - vss. 12-16
7. Peter reported to those present all that happened - vs. 17
8. As a result of Peter's escape the guards who had guarded him were put to death - vss. 18-19

E. Paul and Barnabas were driven out of Pisidian Antioch as a result of the Jews' persecution of them - Acts 13:44-52

F. Paul and Barnabas fled from Iconium at a threat of being mistreated and stoned by both the Gentiles and Jews - Acts 14:1-7

G. After the healing of a lame man, the people of Lystra thought Paul and Barnabas were gods. After preaching to them, the Jews from Antioch and Iconium came and turned the crowds against Paul, stoning him and leaving him for dead. The next day Paul left the area- Acts 14:8-20

H. Paul and Silas were beaten with rods and thrown into jail in Philippi for casting out a demon in a slave girl who had a spirit of divination. As a result of their imprisonment, the jailer's family believed. Paul and Silas sang with joy in their suffering - Acts 16:16-40

I. The Jews in Thessalonica, being jealous of Paul formed a mob against him so he had to leave the area - Acts 17:1-10

J. The Jews from Thessalonica came to Berea and stirred up the Jews there, so Paul once again had to leave the area. - Acts 17:10-15

K. The Jews in Corinth rose up against Paul to no avail - Acts 18:12-17

L. The silversmiths and men of similar trades of Ephesus turned against Paul because he turned many people away from idols. Paul then needed to leave the area. - Acts 19:23-20:1

M. Paul's arrest, trials and transportation to Rome are recorded. As a result of his imprisonment, the gospel continued to progress and other believers who observed this became stronger in their faith (cf. Php. 1:12-14). Jews and their leaders, Gentiles and Roman leaders, guards and prisoners, and others heard the gospel message from the Apostle Paul during this time of his imprisonment. During this time Paul wrote epistles which were used to spread the gospel and strengthen the churches of Christ. - Acts 21:27-28:31

SUMMARY:

There are dominant aspects of these accounts which are fourfold: The first is the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit. This filling is what gave those persecuted the power to do what they did, and to do it with boldness. The second aspect is that, even when they were told to speak no longer in the name of Jesus, they refused and continued. They could not stop testifying about what they had seen and heard. The third aspect is closely related to the second, this being that even during times of persecution the ministry of the church did not stop. It continued on even in the face of threats and persecutions. In other words, Spirit-filled believers continued to do the ministry in spite of the consequences, trusting God with the results. The last aspect is that even when the consequences brought suffering, the recipients of that suffering rejoiced and glorified God for being found worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' sake.

Other observations include the fact that the Apostles and Stephen were not afraid to speak truth to the Jews about how they were murderers, having crucified the Messiah of Israel, how they resisted the Holy Spirit, and did not follow the Word of God. Even though this brought anger and retribution, because of their Spirit-filling, they boldly spoke the truth.

Another observation is taken from the account of Stephen. When Stephen spoke to the Jewish Council and was stoned by them, God gave him the grace needed in both situations (cf. Acts 6:15; 7:55-56). God's grace is sufficient in everything (2 Cor. 9:8; 12:9), even in times of persecution and death which may result from the persecution (cf. Psa. 23:4).

Also from these passages in Acts we see that in the midst of persecution the gospel continued to progress and the church continued to grow. Persecution will not hinder God or His plans; no one or no situation can stop Him. God will continue to call those who are His out of the world to Himself.

A further observation is that God controls the results of the persecution. In one instance James was put to death, in another Peter was released to escape and move on to other opportunities of ministry. Even in the life of Paul, sometimes he was imprisoned and beaten, even stoned, and other times he learned about the potential of persecution and moved onto a new location without harm. God is in control and knows what a person is capable of and not capable of handling. God also knows the results that He desires in each and every situation.

A final observation is that Satan is working in the world against the gospel. He will stir up those who are his to persecute, slander and attempt to destroy the

church of Christ; but ultimately he will not succeed. Jesus is the Victor along with those who are His. Satan may seemingly win some battles, but he already lost the war at the cross.

VII. Passages which describe persecution/suffering

A. Christ - "Matt. 2:13; Matt. 12:14, 24 Mark 3:22; Luke 6:11; 11:15. Matt. 16:1 Matt. 26:3, 4, 14–16 [Mark 14:1; 14:48.] Matt. 26:59; Matt. 27:25–30, 39–44 Mark 15; John 19. Mark 3:6, 21; Mark 15:34 Mark 16; 17. Luke 4:28, 29; Luke 7:34 Matt. 11:19. Luke 11:53, 54; Luke 12:50 Matt. 20:22. Luke 13:31; Luke 19:14, 47 Mark 11:18. Luke 20:20 Matt. 22:15; Mark 12:13. Luke 22:2–5, 52, 53, 63–65 Matt. 26:67; Mark 14:65. Luke 23:11, 23 Mark 15:14. John 5:16; John 7:1, 7, 19, 20, 30, 32; John 8:37, 40, 48, 52, 59 John 10:31. John 10:20, 39; John 11:57; John 14:30; John 15:18, 20, 21, 24, 25; John 18:22, 23, 29, 30; John 19:6, 15; Acts 2:23; Acts 3:13–15; Acts 4:27; Acts 7:52; Acts 13:27–29; Heb. 12:2, 3; 1 Pet. 4:1" (Note: These references were copied from the "The New Nav's Topical Bible," copyright 1994 by logos Research Systems)

B. Paul - 2 Cor. 11:23-28; "Acts 9:16, 23–25, 29; Acts 16:19–25 *vs.* 2:24.; Acts 20:22–24; Acts 21:13, 27–33; Acts 22:22–24; Acts 23:10, 12–15; Rom. 8:35–37; 1 Cor. 4:9, 11–13; 2 Cor. 1:8–10; 2 Cor. 4:8–12; 2 Cor. 6:4, 5, 8–10; 2 Cor. 11:23–27, 32, 33; 2 Cor. 12:10; Gal. 5:11; Gal. 6:17 1 Thess. 3:4. Phil. 1:30; Phil. 2:17, 18; Col. 1:24; 1 Thess. 2:2, 14, 15; 2 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 2:9, 10; 2 Tim. 3:11, 12; 2 Tim. 4:16, 17" (Note: These references were copied from the "The New Nav's Topical Bible," copyright 1994 by logos Research Systems)

C. Books of Acts - 4:1-37; 5:17-42; 6:8-7:60; 8:1-4; 9:1-2; 12:1-19; 13:44-52; 14:1-7; 14:8-20; 16:16-40; 17:1-9; 17:10-15; 18:12-17; 19:23-41; 21:27-28:31

D. Thessalonians - 1 Thes. 1:6-7; 2:14

E. Hebrews - Heb. 10:32-34; 11:35-40

F. Church of Smyrna - Rev. 2:8-11

VIII. Advice from church leaders who experienced persecution

A. Sunday Bwanhot, a Nigerian pastor who has been beaten for his faith and who had friends killed for their faith in northern Nigeria advised:

> It is common that our flesh wants to react to protect oneself. But this is not how we are to respond. You need to be ready to die. This the unbeliever cannot understand. Go boldly as you go. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Be obedient to the Scriptures. Obey God. He is mighty and powerful. He can rescue people. Do what you should do and trust God. God will use the shedding of blood. We need to be ready to live or die. The Spirit of God will lead you as He did Paul. There is no specific plan for every situation; you need to take each case as it comes. Each situation is different. God gives grace at the point of torture or death, or He will intervene. You will receive His grace at the time of need. You are not alone. God will empower you. More come to church after the persecution. The persecuted church must help itself and be united; it must share its resources. The different groups/denominations need to pull together and set aside their differences to help one another. What happens to one group could happen to another.

B. Pastor Vitali Kozoubovskii, a Ukrainian Pastor, advised:
   1. Share info about meetings you had with government officials
   2. When called to a government office - never talk about politics or the authorities
   3. Don't report on other ministers
   4. Commit your family and your life to Christ - completely
   5. Don't deny Christ
   6. Share Christ when called to office of government officials
   7. Don't fear those who kill the body but cannot destroy your soul

C. Pastor Pavel, a Ukrainian Pastor, advised:
   Unity is important. People must stick together. There must not be any secrets. If the pastor or a church member is pressured for a bribe, is threatened or anything else by the authorities, he should tell the church so that the members know everything. When one person is alone they can fall, but when the church stands together, they cannot be easily swayed.

D. A Ukrainian Pastor advised:
   One who faces the persecution ought to do three things:
   1) Remember God's promises ("He is always with us at any place"). His promises encourage and strengthen us in any circumstances of life.
   2) Commit your entire life to the Lord
   3) Continue to abide in prayer to God.

E. A Ukrainian Pastor advised:
   1) You have to have prayer meetings with church leaders of the persecuted church.
   2) Teach your church members to pray for those who persecute them and to bless them.
   3) Focus your church members on doing evangelism through doing good works.
   4) Involve your youth in small groups for prayer.
   5) Inspire the church with sermons on topics like, "God will provide" (Gen.22:8), "Deliverance from the Lord" (Ex.14:13), "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil.4:13), and others like these.

F. A Ukrainian Pastor advised:
   1. Be open and sincere before God and the brothers.
   2. Don't be afraid of the enemy because our God is almighty.
   3. Be faithful to the Lord; He is faithful.

G. When asked about evangelism, fellowship and discipleship/training of believers in the time of persecution, Pastor Vitali Kozoubovskii said:
   1. How did his church evangelize during persecution without being caught?
      Most of the new believers were from Christian families since it was not easy to evangelize. Personal relationships were the key. Since people couldn't trust each other, they were very careful to build friendships before witnessing. God would open the mind of a believer to witness before giving him the opportunity, just as He does today. The only difference was that door-to-door, public crusades or anything like that would not be allowed. There was probably no way to evangelize and not be caught. Even when Christians didn't evangelize they were still called to the government offices many times and questioned anyway.
   2. How did they promote fellowship during persecution without being caught?
      When you talk about the times of persecution, there was a lot of fear and limits on what you could do. There was a risk, and we did not have a

system of methods or suggestions to avoid "not being caught." Instead, it was a matter of making quick decisions right in the midst of the situation; seeking the will of God through prayer and the collective wisdom of the church ministers.

Fellowship is part of being a believer, so people were seeking it anyway because it was understood and taught in sermons. Even when fellowship had to be done in secret in the forests or cemeteries, again, the importance of prayer was understood when looking for creative ways to do it. Therefore the church and its ministers prayed about it. There were of course times when they were caught anyway because the government officials had many spies among believers.

3. How did they disciple/teach believers during persecution without being caught?
   Personal relationships, mentorship and small groups were where everyone could know each other, build trust and accountability. The small group movement and one-on-one mentorship is not a new method of ministry. It is biblical and must occur during persecution. In those times our seminary consisted of meetings at night in the cemeteries for Bible study, learning to preach and do ministry. It was spooky, but no one bothered us there.
   The next step was twofold: 1) believers found ways of meeting in small groups in secret places; 2) church ministers did their best to find ways to open the church so that they could meet. Sometimes this worked and sometimes it did not. As a note, our congregation existed for 35 years without our own place to worship. We rented from the Seventh Day Adventists. Before that happened, our church had three church buildings taken away from us by the government officials. None of them were ever returned to us. Since it was forbidden to gather outside of the church building, they took away our places of worship for this reason - "to stop the church!"

APPENDIX:

Pastors' Wives Know Joy & Pain

Pastors' Wives Know Joy & Pain
By Jo Gray
Special to the Standard
From The Baptist Standard magazine, Dallas, Texas

Wanted: Adult female to serve without pay. Must be able to function without complaint as secretary, music director, nursery worker, janitor, auxiliary president and fund-raiser. On call 24 hours a day. Cooking abilities a plus. Good sense of humor helpful.

In many churches, this is the unpublished job description of the pastor's wife -- perhaps the only profession that has no real job description but is deemed vital to her husband's success.

Lawyers do not depend on their wives to defend clients. Doctors don't need their wives in the operating room. But in many churches, a pastor needs his wife in the ministry.

Pastors' wives sometimes see themselves not only without a title or job description but without an identity.

"I've got a name, and it's not 'The Pastor's Wife,'" said one pastor's wife, summing up her frustration of being identified with her husband's occupation in a way most women are not.

"As soon as I am introduced as the pastor's wife, I know I will be seen as someone to fill a vacancy and provide chicken casseroles when the need calls for it," said this woman, who asked not to be named.

Other pastors' wives find joy in what they once would have considered obligation. Lisa Newton, for example, has been a pastor's wife nearly 14 years. She currently teaches a Sunday School class of teenagers.

"When I was new to the ministry, I would have felt inadequate to teach," she explained. "Now I do it because it is in my heart to do so."

Ruth McKay, another pastor's wife, experienced a clear call from God to be a pastor's wife when she was 14. Today, she also finds personal fulfillment in teaching children at church.

Even after 50 years of being married to a pastor, she feels certain about her own call to serve. "God revealed it to me," she said.

"You have to be willing and able to answer God's call," McKay said. "I've done more of what God has wanted me to do rather than what the church wanted."

Yet expectations often are hard to break.

Newton said she never will forget the time she was asked by a member of a small congregation if she played the piano or sang. When she told the inquirer she did neither, she was asked, "What do you do?"

"People just assume the pastor preaches and you must sing and/or play the piano," Newton said. "It is part of the role and is often expected of the pastor's wife."

Sometimes, this expectation becomes part of the job interview if churches are seeking a package deal when hiring the pastor, she said.

One of the hardest things for her as the pastor's wife, Newton said, is losing her own identity.

"As a mother, I am known as Brooklyn's mom or Brittan's mom. And I am known as the pastor's wife. I don't mind being called Lisa."

The life of a pastor's wife can be lonely at times, Newton said, explaining that she and other pastors' wives live in a situation that, by its nature, limits close personal friendships.

"You're surrounded by people, yet you are often alone," she said. "I believe this is why many pastors' wives become depressed and somewhat withdrawn. We all need someone we can be honest with and share our feelings with -- someone to understand."

Yet the pastor's wife cannot confide in the women of the church about family issues, because these are the women who confide in her husband when they themselves are faced with the same kind of issues.

"You have to minister to the minister, but there is no one to minister to me," said one young pastor's wife who asked not to be identified. She fears that to share her real feelings is too big a risk to take.

Another young pastor's wife agrees but said there are times when sharing is important.

"I have learned, so far, that being in the ministry automatically puts you in that fishbowl status," said Melissa Adams, who has been a pastor's wife less than two years. "People are always looking for fault, which they will find at some point or another because we are human."

She echoed Newton's feelings of loneliness.

"That sense of loneliness can soon allow self-doubt to creep into our lives," she said. "We no longer feel we are doing a good job in any of our roles. The job we have doesn't always produce tangible results. That in itself can make us doubt our self-worth."

McKay, on the other hand, said she and her husband have always been a part of the community in which they serve, which has given them no lack of friends or the time to feel lonely.

"I recall the words of an old church member who said, 'Being lonely is a sin,'" McKay said. "I'm inclined to agree. I read. I talk to the flowers. I even talk to my toes if need be."

Jeanie Mayfield fell in love with and married a sailor who had no interest in serving God at the time. She has watched God work in the life of her husband, who currently is a pastor. And now as a pastor's wife, she has had to adjust to expectations that are beyond her expertise.

"I am totally inadequate at taking charge and planning dinners and a lot of functions," she explained. "This was intimidating at first, but I have learned that God always blesses me with ladies who are very good at this sort of thing."

Now widowed, Sharon Escobar served as a pastor's wife for more than 40 years. She was 16 years old when she married a minister.

"I was so young and inexperienced that my biggest problem was me," she said. "I would lay awake at night and worry that I would ruin my husband's life because I was so ignorant."

Escobar now realizes that a pastor's wife is first of all a human being with the same wants and needs as any other woman. Yet she knows members of the congregation do not always acknowledge this fact.

"I believe our expectations of ministry and the belief that certain things are expected of us as pastor's wives can cause a lot of frustration," Escobar said, recalling how she felt when she had to be involved in every aspect of church work in her younger days.

"This resulted in a very tired wife and mother," she said. "Gradually, I learned there has to be a balance in anyone's life if there is to be anything that is worthwhile."

Success as a minister's wife also requires turning the proverbial "other cheek," McKay added.

"I have swallowed a lot of hurt," she said. "But it is better to take the criticism than to break up the church. I've been criticized for hugging, but if I can give a hug, it's one thing I can do that may make a difference."

Sandy Brooks, too, has learned to deal with the hurtful things people say to her as a pastor's wife. She has served alongside her pastor husband 28 years.

She tries to consider the source and not let words get her down. "Negative remarks usually come from immature Christians," she explained.

A key to surviving such incidents is to be secure, Brooks added. "We have to be secure in our relationship with our husband. We have to be secure in our relationship with the church, with God and with ourselves."

And that gets back to calling.

"I believe being a pastor's wife is as much a calling as being called to preach," Brooks said. "It is a calling, not a chosen profession."

There is joy to be found in the journey, she insisted.

"Seeing lives change for the positive, that's what keeps us going," Brooks said. "In the ministry, people come to us seeking help and reassurance. If everything around me is going bad but I can help one person, it is uplifting."

(Permission to reprint: Feb. 21, 2007; Marv Knox)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Randy was raised in a Catholic home in the United States. During his childhood he began to question the existence of God, and in his early adult life considered himself an atheist. Later as a result of people speaking to him about Christ, he began to question his beliefs. As a result of this, he read the New Testament and portions of the Old Testament while considering the claims made about Jesus. After understanding that Jesus was who He claimed to be, Randy understood that there had to be a God. It was at that time (August 18, 1982) that he placed his trust in Jesus Christ as his Savior.

Within the year following Randy's conversion, he began to pray for Soviet believers who were imprisoned for their faith. During this time a desire developed in his life to go to the Soviet Union and work with pastors. It was however not until eleven years later in 1994, after having completed Bible college and while he was a pastor, that he made his first trip to Ukraine. Two years later he returned, first to teach for two weeks in Russia, followed by two weeks in Ukraine. It was these experiences that helped him better understand God's specific direction for his life. Randy and his family, wife Annette and four children (Elya, Jeremiah, Luke and Tabitha) moved to Kiev, Ukraine, in July, 2001. Randy and Annette have lived in Kiev for almost ten years as of July, 2011. They are involved in the training of church leaders and their wives in Eurasia.

During Randy's time of ministry in the United States, he was the interim pastor of two small churches which needed assistance and was involved in jail ministry as well as evangelism to the homeless. He later served as the senior pastor of the Bark River Bible Church in Michigan for over eight years. He also ministered as an associate of Bible Related Ministries for 10 years (1990-2000), an organization which assists churches in need of help, ranging from providing preachers or pastors to helping mediate church disputes.

Randy's educational background includes a technical degree in electronic technology, a Bachelor's degree in Bible and a Master's degree in Ministry, both from Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, IL.

Having a dynamic church which is developing in a way that brings glory to God is vital. This should be the objective of the pastor and elders in an existing church, as well as that of the evangelist (church planter or cross-cultural missionary) as he starts new churches in his home country or abroad.

The purpose of this manual is to assist church leaders in rethinking such issues as:

- why the church exists
- the goals and purpose of the church
- why church structure is important
- who should be in leadership roles
- what ministries the church should be engaged in
- women's roles in the church
- the pastor's spiritual walk, family, preaching and teaching ministry
- additional topics

Following most chapters is an application section with practical questions for pastors, elders and evangelists. These questions are written to enable them to evaluate their ministries, either affirming what they are currently doing, or helping them consider ways to approach their ministries differently for improved results.

The main goal of this manual is to present supracultural principles for the reader to apply in his specific context. Supracultural principles are the mandates of Scripture which the church is to follow. Culture is the context in which they are applied. Therefore, it is the reader's objective to apply the Word of God in such a way that culture does not overshadow or become more important than biblical mandates. Yet, the reader still needs to understand the world in which he lives in order to integrate supracultural principles in a way that his church is biblical and relevant.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The author has lived in Ukraine since 2001 and is available to lead training seminars for groups of pastors, elders and evangelists on this material throughout the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. He is also available online for those who want to write to him about issues pertaining to their churches.

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