

EVANGELISM:

How to Mobilize Your Church



Randall J. Hillebrand

(A companion volume to "Building a Dynamic Church")

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To my wife Annette, the mother of our four children,
my partner in ministry, my companion for life;
the one who said to me before we got married,
“I will follow you anywhere in the world,” and she has.

PREFACE

This book is a companion volume to my first book, “Building a Dynamic Church” (BDC). BDC covers many topics necessary for church health such as leadership issues, its goals, purpose, ministries, etc. Both books were written to assist church leaders in their work of building the Church of Jesus Christ.

This book, as the title asserts, is on the topic of evangelism. However, it is not a resource which speaks about the mechanics, techniques or methods of evangelism. There are many books and even entire programs available on how to share one’s faith, on apologetics (how to defend one’s faith), etc.; but these issues are not the objective of this book. My purpose and goal is to assist church leaders in the preparation and mobilization of their congregations to do evangelism. Therefore this work presents the foundational factors which must be in place in a church so that evangelism is an ongoing reality.

Because this book deals extensively with the importance of the Word of God in relationship to evangelism, some may think that this book is more about the necessity of teaching and preaching the Bible than it is about evangelism. Though this response is understandable, it was necessary to write much on the importance of God’s Word because it is the key to mobilizing a church. The two issues are interrelated and cannot be separated.

One should keep in mind that though throughout this book I speak predominantly about the pastor and evangelist as the leaders of the church, I do this for simplicity of writing. I am firmly convinced from the Scriptures that the church is to be directed by a group of elders, of which the pastor and/or evangelist are a part, and of which they are to be the primary leader. Though the pastor and evangelist are special roles within the church due to their particular calling of God (Eph. 4:11), nonetheless, they are to work together in leading their church with the assistance of other godly men who are elders and fellow overseers. In the appendix there is a portion of a chapter titled, “Pastor’s and Evangelist’s Equipping Ministry” from BDC

which speaks to this issue. It is titled, "Why a Plurality of Elders?" Please see this chapter for further explanation.

Also, in this book I define an evangelist as a church planter. It is my 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 the evangelist; Acts 8:5-8,12). Therefore, in this book an evangelist is a person whose ministry is organizing new churches.

Though I attempted to write this book for a wide audience, I had the former Soviet Union in mind when writing. Therefore if something I have written does not seem relevant to your context, this may be the reason why. My hope and prayer is that you find this book helpful in your ministry.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Annette for being the proofreader of this book. Thank you for your diligence to detail and your persistence in completing the project.



Building a Dynamic Church

Randy and his wife Annette have lived in Ukraine since 2001 and are available to lead training seminars for groups of pastors, elders, evangelists and their wives. Randy, as a former pastor, can provide training throughout the countries of Eurasia on how to build a dynamic church and on how to mobilize your church to do evangelism. As a former pastor's wife, Annette can provide training for leaders' wives on various topics of interest to them. Randy is also available online for those who would like to write him about issues pertaining to their churches.

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Chapter 1.

THE CHURCH: AN EQUIPPING CENTER

"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 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."
(Ephesians 4:11-13)

The Importance of Understanding One's Role

How a pastor and evangelist (a church planter) understand their roles and the role of the church will determine what kind of church they develop. Do they see themselves as shepherds, as moderators, as chief executive officers, as rulers, as social directors, etc.? What is their view of the local church? Is it to be a venue for evangelism, entertainment, community, social programs, liturgy, etc.? Until they understand their scriptural roles, the pastor and evangelist will not know if they are laboring for and moving their church toward the correct goal. So what is the biblical role of the pastor and evangelist to be? What is the biblical role of the church?

The Biblical Role of the Church

As the title of this chapter asserts, the church is to be an equipping center. It is to be a place which prepares its members, equipping them to serve. On the other hand it is not to be a place of entertainment, a social club, a community center, a philosophical or intellectual society, or a humanitarian organization. Though a church may contain varying aspects of these aforementioned church forms, the church is to be much more than all of these things together. Specifically, the church is an organism designed by God for the purpose of impacting the world around it for

Christ. This will only occur when the church becomes a place where its members are trained to do so. God's design of the church conveyed in 1 Corinthians 12 reveals how this role was intended be fulfilled.

"⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. ⁶There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. ⁷But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good....¹¹But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. ¹²For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³For 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." (vss. 4-7, 11-13; emphasis added).

Six important aspects of God's design of the body of Christ which make it an organism built to make an impact are observed. They are:

1. A variety of spiritual gifts are given to its members for this purpose (vss. 4, 7, 11)
2. A variety of ministries are devised through which the spiritual gifts can function (vs. 5)
3. A variety of effects are produced resulting from the gifts working through the various ministries (vs. 6)
4. God is involved in empowering this process (vs. 6)
5. The body is diverse so that it will produce varied ministries and effects (vs. 12; cf. 14-20, 27-30).
6. The body is one (unified) so that it will work together as a single unit (vss. 12-13; cf., vss. 21-26, 27-30).

God's design of the body of Christ has a definite and specific purpose. To fulfill His purpose, all believers are equipped for service by the Holy Spirit. Believers are to use their spiritual gift in various ways and in various ministries. God promises that as a result of this combination of gifts and

ministries there will be a variety of effects produced, and that He Himself will utilize these effects in the lives of men. One aspect of this design which makes the body of Christ so effective, intricate and far reaching is the fact that God designed it as a diverse, yet unified unit. In other words, its ability to function is unlimited. Incorporated into all of this is the fact that God empowers this entire process. Consequently such an organism, if properly equipped by its church leaders, can make a great impact in the world around it.

The Role of the Pastor and Evangelist

Though the body of Christ is so composed to impact the world, God has given pastors and evangelists the job of equipping the members of the body for the work of service. The outcome of their work is to result in “the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12). This is the reason why pastors and evangelists (who are included in the category of church elders) are supposed to be “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:24; Titus 1:9). Their ability to teach is vital to the church’s health and longevity; its health being evidenced by its unity, maturity, understanding of the Word of God, Christlikeness, love, and its ability to work together (Eph. 4:13-16). Therefore it is the job of the pastor and evangelist to labor for these results. They are to work with the goal of building up the body of Christ which has been allotted to their charge (1 Pet. 5:3). They are to work hard at teaching their church members (cf., 1 Tim. 5:17) all that Christ commanded (Mat. 28:20) so that they are knowledgeable about the Son of God (Eph. 4:13). Their church is to arrive at maturity and be filled with Christlikeness to its greatest possible potential so that it is not deceived and led astray (Eph. 4:13-14). They are to work at building a church through which love and the grace of God flows so that the body will grow and be built up (Eph. 4:15-16). Consequently, in order for this to happen, as Paul stated in Ephesians 4:11-12, it is the responsibility of the pastor and evangelist to equip “the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.” (For a further explanation of Ephesians 4:11-16 please see Chapter 3.)

The ministry of teaching was so important in the early church that the Apostles were firmly committed to this task. In Acts 2:42, immediately after the church began it says:

“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

Due to the importance of this ministry, the Apostles were from the very beginning teaching new believers. Later it is recorded in Acts 6:4 when a problem arose within the church over the feeding of the widows, that the Apostles said in regards to the oversight of this ministry, “select from among you seven men...” (Acts 6:3);

“But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” (vs. 4)

This is significant, for they were stating that this was their main ministry as the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. In other words, this is where they invested the majority of their time.

The teaching of the Word of God was of great importance to the Apostle Paul as well. When Paul was in Corinth, Luke wrote that he spent a year and a half teaching the Word of God (Acts 18:11); and when he was in Ephesus Luke recorded:

“⁸And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading *them* about the kingdom of God. ⁹But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. ¹⁰This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.” (Acts 19:8-10)

Paul, after three months of teaching in the synagogue, retreated to the school of Tyrannus where he taught the disciples for two years, teaching not only those in Ephesus but from Asia as well. One Greek manuscript stated that this lecture hall was available for rental from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. when most people would have lunch followed by a nap. It is assumed that this probably was the time during which Paul taught. This of course

would have been the hottest time of the day, yet Paul was serious about this task of teaching, training and building up the body of Christ.

The Seriousness of Understanding These Roles

Understanding the role of the pastor and evangelist and the role of the church is a serious issue. The reason it is important is due to the fact that pastors and evangelists will one day have to answer for how they led and organized their churches. A strong admonition to this reality is found in 1 Corinthians 3.

There the Apostle Paul discusses the church and its growth. Of himself he said that he had laid a foundation for the church which is Christ (vss. 10-11), this having been the job of the apostles and prophets as they preached and taught Christ (cf., Eph. 2:19-20). In verse 10 Paul said that “another,” a reference to another man, “is building on it.” Who was this man? Since Paul singles out one individual, it seems logical to conclude that this is a reference to the church’s pastor. This man’s ministry was building the church upon the foundation of Christ which Paul had laid (which is the pastor’s job – see Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Pet. 5:2-3). Because this was such an important work that this man was doing, Paul said in verse 10: “But each man must be careful how he builds on it.” He then continues in verses 12-15 and says:

“¹²Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. ¹⁴If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

It is clear from Paul’s words that how a pastor or evangelist builds his church is crucial. It is so crucial that Paul wanted the builder of the church in Corinth to consider this fact, because how he constructed the body of Christ there would one day determine how he would be rewarded by Christ.

As this passage clearly establishes, if his work was characterized by quality labor, he would receive a reward for that labor. If his labor was of poor quality, “he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire” (vs. 15). Who at the end of many years of labor would want to stand before Christ for judgment for his service and receive little to no reward? No one I would expect. This is why the pastor and evangelist need to have a proper understanding of their roles and the role of the church in the lives of their church members. To not have this understanding will be damaging to the members of their church and to themselves personally.

Paul then goes on and to give another much stronger exhortation to the church in Corinth:

“¹⁶Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷If 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. 3:16-17)

These verses continue Paul’s discussion of the church. It is important to understand that these verses are not speaking to individual believers about their physical bodies. When Paul said, “Do you not know that you are a temple of God,” the word “you” is in the plural form. In other words, Paul continues to talk to the believers as a whole which make up the church of Corinth. They as a church, Paul tells them, “are a temple of God,” a holy temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells (cf., Eph. 2:19-22). If anyone were to destroy this “temple” – this church – “God will destroy him.”

Though some believe that only a false teacher would destroy a church, this is not implied in this passage. This fact is seen in verse 17 in the words, “if any man.” This is a broad statement which includes not only unbelievers, but believers as well. Actually, when taking these words in conjunction with the previous context (vss. 10-15), verse 17 is a warning not just for unbelievers, but believers alike. The difficulty which may arise in regards to this interpretation for some is that in this verse God says that He “will destroy” the person who “destroys the temple of God.” Would God actually destroy a true believer?

First, it is important to note that the verb “will destroy” (Gk., *phtheiro*) is never used in the New Testament in reference to sending someone to

hell or eternal destruction. It is however looking forward to a future action which is assured and will be accomplished by God. Actually this word has the idea of defiling and corrupting, and this is the only place in the New Testament where it is translated twice as “destroy;” both instances being in this verse. Therefore whoever destroys the temple, this likely being through the defilement and corruption of its members, this person will be dealt with harshly in the future by God. When this will occur in the future Paul does not state. It could occur in this person’s lifetime and/or in eternity. Consequences for a believer in his earthly life could include harsh judgments which are referenced to believers in the New Testament as: being turned over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:19-20); disqualification from ministry (1 Cor. 9:24-27); health issues, including death (1 Cor. 11:30; 1 John 5:16-17); or a destroyed faith as the result of one’s own actions (1 Tim. 1:19-20). Consequences after death for such a believer will most like include the loss of eternal rewards (cf., 1 Cor. 3:13, 15) which will affect him for eternity. In the case of an unbeliever, his eternal judgment will include a severer punishment for eternity in the lake of fire since he will receive greater condemnation because of this evil deed (Psa. 62:12; Mark 12:40; Rom. 2:5-6; Rev. 20:12).

Due to the fact that verses 16 and 17 are applicable to the believer, the pastor, evangelist and other church leaders need to be careful that their actions and/or teachings do not in any way defile, corrupt or destroy a church of God. Hebrews 10:30-31 warns believers:

“³⁰For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” ³¹It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (emphasis added).

The Importance of God’s Word in God’s Plan

For a church to be an equipping center its leaders must understand the importance of God’s Word in God’s plan. Before pastors and evangelists will utilize the Word of God as they should, they must understand its true importance to their ministry. The reason the Apostles were able to devote themselves to the Word of God and its teaching was because they understood and were assured that it is:

- inerrant (Num. 23:19; 2 Tim. 3:16; John 17:17; cf., John 14:26; Gal. 3:16)
- inspired (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21)
- infallible (Mat. 5:18)
- imperishable, living and enduring (Isa. 40:8; 1 Pet. 1:23)
- effectual and sufficient for its task, having the power to accomplish all that God desires (Isa. 55:10-11)
- invasive, causing a man to look intently at his thoughts and intentions (Heb. 4:12)
- able to transform the lives of unbelievers into followers of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:22-25; cf., Acts 2:37-38)
- able to equip God's people for ministry (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- able to cleanse and sanctify a believer, therefore transforming his mind, taking him to maturity (John 17:17; Eph. 5:25-27; Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:23)
- able to bring success to those who are obedient to it (Josh. 1:8)
- a believer's sword which is his defense against Satan (Eph. 6:11-13,17; cf., Mat. 4:4, 7, 10; Heb. 4:12)
- the source of wisdom and understanding (Psa. 111:10; 119:104, 130)
- able to keep a believer's way pure (Psa. 119:9-11)
- a light for a person's path and a lamp to his feet (Psa. 119:105)

(For a more in-depth discussion on this topic, please see the chapter in the appendix titled, "The Word of God in Ministry.")

Knowing these things about the Word of God, the minister of the Word should face his task with confidence. He should know that the sword of the Spirit which he wields is able to accomplish the task at hand. He should remember that God will use it to accomplish the task which He sent it to fulfill, even if the minister of the gospel does not see the results of his actions. For as he ministers, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are there with him to accomplish the task (cf., 1 Cor. 12:4-7).

A Mandate to Use the Word of God

The pastor and evangelist also need to understand that the Word of God is their primary tool in their equipping center, the church. It is through the teaching of the Word of God that people learn truth, gain wisdom, come to

understand their needs and responsibilities, including their responsibility to be involved in evangelism. Therefore the man of God, as he uses the Bible through the direction and power of the Holy Spirit, will see men, women and children in his church move forward in their faith, grow in obedience to the Word and become more fruitful disciples of Christ. If he does not do this, his results will be minimal.

Therefore pastors and evangelists cannot just articulate that the Word of God is important; they must demonstrate it through their actions. They must carefully prepare messages with the hope and anticipation of God producing great results. The pastor who sees the importance and power of the Word of God will give great diligence to this process as he handles accurately the Word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15). He will approach this aspect of his ministry as he should every aspect of his ministry – with faith. Hebrews 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.” The preacher and teacher of the Word of God must prepare to preach and teach in faith, without any doubting, for such a person God will reward.

God will also reward those who diligently study, practice and teach the Word of God. This is seen in the life of Ezra the scribe. It says of him in Ezra 7:6, 9-10:

“⁶This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all he requested because the hand of the Lord his God was upon him... ⁹For on the first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon; and on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, because the good hand of his God was upon him. ¹⁰For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.” (emphasis added)

Ezra had made it his ambition to know (“study”), practice and teach the Word of God in Israel. Because of this desire, he “set his heart to study the Law of the Lord.” The outcome of this endeavor was that he became skilled in the law. This is significant because as a result of his efforts, “the

hand of the Lord his God was upon him” (please notice in this passage that this is mentioned twice – that God’s hand was upon him). God made it clear that He chose Ezra because of his three aspirations. In other words, God blesses those who take these endeavors seriously. This is why it is important for pastors and evangelists to be skilled in the Word of God. They, like Ezra, need to set their hearts on studying to know the Word of God. As a result of their efforts, they will gain concrete knowledge about God and His expectations which they must put into practice. Their practice will result in them gaining experience with God as He works in and through them in everyday events of life. This will also help them learn how to use the Word of God in their life and ministry. Through these things they will come to know God better so that they will be able to represent Him and His Word more accurately as they speak to or teach others about Him. Thus they will speak and teach not from theory or speculation but from actual encounters with the living God as a result of God illuminating His Word and further revealing Himself to them. Such men are the ones whom God desires to use. These are the kind of men under whom God will place His sheep to be cared for, to be spiritually fed by, and to be guided by. Paul echoes the importance of such men by his words in 1 Timothy 5:17, that those “who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.” Those who rule the sheep well are worthy of double honor, but as Paul points out, “especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.” Therefore this should be the goal of those who are called by God to leadership roles within the church. The teaching of their sheep should be their top priority. (Please see the chapter in the appendix titled, “The Word of God in Ministry.”)

Having at his disposal such an essential and powerful tool as the Word of God, the pastor and evangelist need to make sure that they utilize it to its fullest potential in every aspect of their ministries. To do this they need to formulate a strategic plan for their church through which they can be assured that they are equipping the saints for service, therefore building up the body of Christ. For this reason “be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

Chapter 2.

EVANGELISM: GATHER THEN SCATTER!

"How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?
How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?
And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach
unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet
of those who bring good news of good things!" However,
they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "Lord,
who has believed our report?" So faith comes from hearing,
and hearing by the word of Christ."
(Romans 10:14-17)

The Principle Explained

As was established in Chapter 1, the church is to be an equipping center. It is to be a place where people are equipped with the Word of God so that they can impact their world. As the verses above state, "How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent?" Understanding this, the pastor and evangelist must approach evangelism from this perspective. They need to prepare those who will take the message and then to send them out from their midst to those who have not heard. This is God's plan. Church leaders should not expect the unreached to simply wander into their church someday.

Church leaders also need to understand that the church should not be a place which continually uses its services as a platform for evangelism. In other words, the church is not to be the place where people are brought on a regular basis by church members to be evangelized by their pastor or evangelist. The church's leaders are not to be the ones to whom people turn to for the purpose of evangelizing their friends, family, coworkers, neighbors, etc. This is to be the work of the church members. Does this mean that on occasion the church should not hold special evangelistic services for the purpose of reaching the lost? No! Certain times of the year like Christmas, Easter, etc., are great times for such events; and churches

need to take advantage of such opportunities. The point to be made is simply that evangelism should not be the primary focus of the church's worship services.

Churches which are equipping centers will use their teaching times strategically throughout the week to train their people. One important area of training should be on the importance of evangelism and how to do this work. The pastor and evangelist who understand this principle will realize that it is their task to train their church members in the Word of God. When they gather for their church services, they are to prepare their members to scatter out into the world to minister to the needs of others. As they scatter, they should leave with a clear purpose; that of ministering to others and reaching unbelievers with the gospel of Christ.

This understanding of the church coincides with Matthew 28:19: "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 command in this verse is to "make disciples" which is a command to bring people to faith in Christ (see Acts 14:21). The Greek word translated as "Go" is not a command (it's an aorist passive participle), but could better be translated as, "after going." Therefore Jesus is saying in the first part of the verse, "after going," from Me, "make disciples..." They were gathered to Him and then they scattered, going out into the world proclaiming His message. This verse gives a clear picture of the relationship of the church to evangelism in that, after its members leave from its meetings, they are to work at reaching unbelievers for Christ. The church is an organization designed for this purpose, that of reaching people with the gospel and starting new churches. It was not designed for the purpose of using its gatherings for evangelism, but instead for preparing its members to do evangelism outside the church walls. The teaching which its members receive is to be used upon their scattering from the church, putting into practice all that Christ commanded and reaching unbelievers with the gospel.

The Foundation of This Principle – Teaching

In considering this principle further, one needs to consider the words of the Apostle Paul to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4. There Paul wrote to Timothy about his responsibilities as a pastor:

¹³Until I come, give attention to the *public* reading of *Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching. ¹⁴Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. ¹⁵Take pains with these things; be *absorbed* in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. ¹⁶Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you” (vss. 13-16).

Paul made it clear what Timothy was to focus on – the Scriptures and his teaching of them. This is evidenced by the fact that in reference to the Word of God Paul instructs him five times in four verses to:

- “give attention to” (vs. 13)
- “take pains with these things” (vs. 15)
- “be absorbed in them” (vs. 15)
- “pay close attention to” (vs. 16)
- “persevere in these things” (vs. 16)

Paul makes it very apparent that the ministry of the Word is important. It is to be the main focus of the pastor and evangelist. Later in 2 Timothy 4, Paul’s last communication with Timothy before Paul’s martyrdom, he reminds Timothy once again about his duties in regard to the Word of God. Here Paul says:

“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: ²preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”

This is what Timothy was to be engaged in as the pastor of the church of Ephesus. He was always to be ready to preach the Word, when the Word of God was sought after and when it was not (“be ready in season *and* out of season”). This is only possible when a person invests much time in the study of the Word of God. Then in verse 5 Timothy was exhorted:

“But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

It is obvious from Paul's words that Timothy was to be involved, not only in the work of teaching the Word of God, but also in fulfilling the work of an evangelist. What was the work of an evangelist? It was bringing people to faith in Christ in conjunction with the goal of starting new churches. This is what the Scriptures indicate was the work of Philip the evangelist (cf., Acts 8:5-8, 12). Obviously this was the work which Paul wanted Timothy and his church involved in as well.

The main work of a pastor and evangelist is the "equipping of the saints for the work of service" (Eph. 4:12). This is primarily done through his teaching ministry, though of course the discipleship process is very diverse and can include many facets of training. Yet the teaching and preaching of the Word of God is to be the main area of ministry where pastors and evangelists invest their time. It is this ministry through which they will prepare church members to use their spiritual gifts in order to have a church which will experience both spiritual and numerical growth.

The Benefits of the Gathering/Scattering Principle

There are various reasons why the understanding of this role of the church is beneficial to it, its growth, and its mission. Probably the most important benefit is that a church can be effective in gathering and scattering no matter where it is located in the world, or in what circumstances it may be in. For example, it does not matter if the church:

- Is located in a city, a village, or in a sparsely populated area
- Is facing persecution, a bad economy, people who are indifferent to Christianity, or laws against proselytizing
- Is located in a culture where people do not want uninvited visitors stopping at their homes, strangers stopping them on the street to talk, where they feel uncomfortable visiting a church, or where mass evangelism is not successful
- Is poor and cannot afford to spend a lot of money on special events, on special speakers, on advertising, etc.

A church after it gathers will scatter, and it is then that its members should work to reach people for Christ. They can begin to reach those with whom they already have a relationship – their neighbors, family, friends, coworkers, and acquaintances. They can also begin to reach out to others

with whom they do not currently have a relationship – such as a neighbor, a person at work, someone they see at the bus stop each morning, etc. – and begin to build one with the intention of speaking to them about Christ sometime in the future. Imagine if just 50% of the members of a local church did this! What would the results be? What if 75% of a church's members made an effort to reach just the people they already know for Christ. What would be the outcome?

Taking this a step further, when people come to faith in Christ as a result of the efforts of a scattered church, this process will repeat itself. This will occur when the new believers (resulting from the efforts of the scattered church) are gathered, trained, and then scatter to evangelize. Whom will they evangelize? Logically, they will reach out to people whom other members in their church may not even know. Therefore, this process is one which can evangelize people that a local church through other methods would never have access to (e.g., people who would never visit their church, people who live in other villages, cities or even countries, etc.). Consequently, the result of this church model will open up many opportunities for the gospel which are endless, especially when God is involved in empowering and directing this process.

Another way to expand the group of potential contacts for a church's members to evangelize is by getting them involved in their community at a grassroots level. To do this the church leaders can encourage them to volunteer at nursing homes, hospitals, orphanages, jails and prisons, at their children's school, in sports programs, at community festivals, etc. This can expand their base of contacts which will expand their opportunities for sharing Christ with others. One man I know who lives in a country where proselytizing children under the age of 18 is illegal heads up a sport's program for youth in the city where he lives. He does this as a way to get to know many children and their parents. Then when the children become 18 years of age, he already has a relationship established with them through which he can share Christ. Whenever he sees one of these children on the street who is in the sport's program, he talks with him or her for the purpose of building this relationship. Because of his work, he is liked and respected in his community. One day when some people tried to cause problems for him outside his home because he is a Christian, a neighbor of his who is not

a believer told these people to go away because he is a good man. They then left. So such methods can produce great results.

Another reason the gather/scatter principle is important is because when the members of a church are trained to evangelize, they will speak to people whom may otherwise never step foot in a church. Because this is the case, church members will reach out to people with the gospel whom a pastor or evangelist may never have the opportunity to talk with or preach to. This is why church members must be encouraged and trained in how to reach unbelievers for Christ.

This Must be the Main Method of Evangelism

Does the gather/scatter principle mean that churches should never look for or be involved in other methods of outreach other than what has already been presented? No! Other methods of evangelism can be very valuable and fruitful. Evangelistic English Clubs, street evangelism, outreach to families and /or children, religious holiday observances, etc., are all excellent avenues in which to share the gospel. Churches need to be creative to look for ways in which to impact their world with the gospel. However these methods should be secondary. The primary method of evangelism should be through its members who have been trained to evangelize the people they have contact with. When this is the norm for a church, there is evangelism occurring all the time, every week, maybe even every day. The benefit is that this method of evangelism is not limited to special evangelistic events which only occur at certain times during the year.

It is important to remember that while one church may be able to carry out many different types of evangelistic ministries due to its financial situation, the number of its members, the location of its building, the reputation of its pastor or of people in its congregation, etc., another church may not have the same resources available. Yet if each person in his church is trained to do personal evangelism, then these other things will not matter because everyone in that church will be involved in evangelism on a regular basis no matter where they are at. This is what is important.

How then does a church become an equipping center to prepare its gathered people before they scatter? The next four chapters will address different facets of this principle.

Chapter 3.

THE BUILDER: PREPARE A BLUEPRINT

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”
(Ephesians 2:19-22)

You Must Have a Plan

In order for the pastor and evangelist to have an effective equipping center from which they can prepare and send out trained church members to reach the lost for Christ they need to have a plan. If they do not have a plan, their work will be disorganized and their results haphazard. Such a church generally will not grow, it will not see many lasting results and will struggle or just simply become complacent in its disorganization. Even if it does grow, eventually the church will have problems and may even fall apart because a growing church needs stability, order and a growth plan. Without these things, problems are inevitable.

Church leaders also need to realize that they are a part of God’s plan. They are an important part of His chosen method to construct His dwelling, the church, which “is growing into a holy temple in the Lord.” Understanding this should give pastors and evangelists the incentive they need to take their ministry seriously. They need to understand that they are part of a much larger and strategic endeavor, and therefore their part is crucial. Their church is a part of a spiritual building of which “Christ Jesus Himself” is “the cornerstone.” In other words, this is a work of God, an eternal work for which they are specifically chosen as builders of the church.

The Need for a Blueprint

Understanding the seriousness of the task at hand, the wise evangelist and pastor will understand that they are builders. The evangelist will build a new church upon the foundation which is Christ (1 Cor. 3:11). The pastor will build upon the same foundation of Christ, though he is generally continuing the work which was started by someone else before him (an evangelist or another pastor). Both are involved in the building process as the Apostle Paul makes clear in 1 Corinthians 3:9-11:

⁹"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. ¹⁰According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. ¹¹For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. "

Whereas, Paul with the other Apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:19-20), laid the foundation of Christ, pastors and evangelists are building upon that foundation a holy temple, a dwelling of God (Eph. 2:21-22). Since this is such an important task, these men are to make sure that the quality of their work is exceptional for one day "each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work" (1 Cor. 3:13).

How then should a pastor and evangelist make sure that the quality of their work is exceptional? First, they need to invest an appropriate amount of time and effort in their teaching ministries as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Second, as wise master builders, they need to have a plan. They need to prepare a well-thought-out set of blueprints which is a part of any construction project; that is, if they desire to construct a quality building. How can a builder create something if he does not know what the final product is supposed to look like? He cannot. This is true for a pastor and evangelist as well. If they do not know what the goals and final results are supposed to be, then how can they build a strong, productive, and healthy church? They cannot. Therefore to get their church from point A to point Z, they need to have a plan. They need to determine their goals according to

the Scriptures. To do this they need to begin by answering questions such as the following:

- What does God desire a Christian to become? (Eph. 4:13)
- What does God desire the character of a Christian to manifest? (John 13:34-35; 1 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:16, 22-23)
- What does God desire the spiritual leaders of their church to reflect in their character? (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9)
- What does God desire the families in their church to be characterized by (husband, wife and children)? (Deut. 6:6-7; Eph. 5:22-33; 6:1-4; Titus 2:4-5; 1 Pet. 3:7)
- How well should their members know the Word of God? (cf., Deut. 6:5-9; Eph. 4:13-15)
- What do their members need to know to be able to effectively reach others for Christ? (1 Cor. 9:19-23; Col. 4:2-6; Mat. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; John 3:16-18; etc.)
- What ministries does God desire their church and its people to be involved in?
 - Worship
 - Fellowship
 - Giving
 - Service
 - Outreach
 - Discipleship
 - Member Care
 - Church Discipline
- Etc., etc., etc.

Once they have determined what God desires their church and its members to be characterized by and manifest in their lives, they are then ready for the next step.

The third step is to evaluate their church to see where it is at spiritually. To do this they need to analyze its strengths and weaknesses against each of the areas of their newly-stated goals. In addition, constructing a profile of the spiritual characteristics of the average church member in their church will be helpful in this process, even though doing so may be subjective. Note such things as:

- His level of scriptural knowledge

- Does he live holy?
- Does he manifest the fruit of the Spirit?
- Does he attend church regularly?
- Does he serve in the church using his spiritual gift?
- Does he share his faith?
- Does he care for the needs of his family?
- Does he love his wife and children?
- Does his family live orderly and according to the Word of God?
- Is he mature?
- Is he stable in his faith?
- Is he faithful?
- Is he generous?
- Is he a man of faith, hope and love?
- Etc.

Once they have analyzed their church's strengths and weaknesses and prepared a profile of what the average church member is characterized by, they are then ready to make a comparison against each of the areas of their newly-stated goals. This will help them see where their church is at, how far it needs to go, and what it needs to change in order to reach the stated goals.

Once they know the goals and the starting point, the fourth step is the prayerful preparation of their blueprint. This will be a step-by-step plan on how to move the church from where it is at to the desired goal. The fifth and last step is to follow the plan. Please note that the blueprint can be revised as they move through the process. As they move forward, things will naturally become clearer and adjustments will be necessary.

Understanding the Main Goals

What are the main goals and results which God desires in a church? These are found in Ephesians 4:11-16, which were briefly discussed in Chapter 1. To establish context, Paul said in Ephesians 4:8:

⁸ "Therefore it says,
"When He ascended on high,
He led captive a host of captives,

And He gave gifts to men.” (emphasis added)

Paul then went on to say in verses 11-16:

¹¹“And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, (emphasis added)

¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

¹³until 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.

¹⁴As 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;

¹⁵but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,

¹⁶from 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.”

In verse 8 Paul states that Christ gave gifts to the church. Then in verse 11 he states what those gifts were – that He gave some as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. The main function of these four offices within the church is then listed in verse 12, that being “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ.” Next Paul continues in verse 13 by listing the goals of their equipping ministry, they being that believers “attain”:

1. “To the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God”
2. “To a mature man”
3. “To the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ”

The results of fulfilling these goals are then listed in verses 14-16:

1. “No longer to be children tossed here and there by waves and carried about:

- a. By every wind of doctrine
 - b. By the trickery of men
 - c. By craftiness in deceitful scheming” (vs. 14)
2. “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)

In summary according to this passage, the ultimate-stated goal for the church is to be mature, and accordingly manifest Christlikeness. This is seen by the characteristics given by Paul summarized below. The members of a mature church:

- Will be unified in the faith (vs. 13)
- Will be knowledgeable about Christ (vs. 13)
- Will be mature and filled with Christ to the maximum potential (vs. 13)
- Will no longer be like children who are easily deceived by (vs. 14):
 - every new, false doctrine
 - by the trickery of false teachers
 - by their craftiness in deceitful scheming
- Will speak the truth of God in love (vs. 15)
- Will grow up into Christlikeness (vs. 15)
- Will have cohesiveness as the result of grace flowing through the body (vs. 16)
- Will grow strong and be further built up in love through the proper working of each individual member (vs. 16)

This is why it is important for pastors and evangelists to evaluate and then prepare a blueprint for their church's growth.

When looking at this list of characteristics of what a mature church is to attain, such high standards can only be reached through much prayer, careful planning and action. It will not happen haphazardly. Results comprised of substance and which are significant are not attained by accident.

When preparing a blueprint for the purpose of making a church mature, the following ministries must be considered:

- **Preaching ministry** (Which books of the Bible and/or what topics should be preached.)

- **Teaching ministry** (Which books of the Bible and/or what topics should be taught in Sunday school, in Bible studies, in home groups, etc.)
- **Special training requirements** (What training needs to take place? Possibly training on topics such as evangelism, how to write and share one's testimony, how to study the Bible, how to preach, how to lead a small group, how to make visits to hospitals and prisons, etc.)
- **Training methods** (What training methods need to be incorporated into the church's strategy for becoming a mature church? Consider such things as Bible studies, small groups, fellowship events, youth meetings, discipleship groups, one-on-one mentoring, etc.)

One should also ask: "Are the current ministries of his church meeting the needs of the church? Are these ministries capable of producing mature believers? If not, what changes need to be made to make these ministries more effective? What aspects of these ministries need to be terminated?" Once these ministries have been evaluated, the pastor and/or evangelist will know the direction he must go and what he needs to do to get his church to the goal. Once he knows this, he can move his church forward.

Maturity and Evangelism are Linked

Church maturity and success in evangelism are closely linked. This is true because the mature believer will understand his need to share his faith with others and have the desire to do so. He will also have the biblical knowledge necessary to accurately and effectively share the gospel with different types of people in various stages of life. Such a believer will have the wisdom and insight to understand people and their needs, as well as where to find the answers in the Scriptures for those who are searching. So if a church is effectively training its people when gathered, it will then be able to send out mature believers to reach the lost when scattered. This is why church leaders need to work hard at bringing their church to maturity. It must be their top priority.

Chapter 4.

THE PULPIT: IT ALL STARTS HERE!

"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 Timothy 4:1-4)

The Pulpit Ministry is Important in Equipping the Church

The church's pulpit is a very important place. It is the place where the members of the church are to hear from God each week when their pastor, evangelist and/or others stand behind it and deliver a message from the Word of God. This is the main place from which the church will hear from its shepherd, hear his heart, his vision and plans for the church; as well as observe his life as he teaches them the Word of God. It is probably through this ministry that the broadest impact will be made in the church, though not necessarily the deepest.

The pulpit is also important because what people see in and hear from it will contribute to defining the church's character and personality. Though there are other factors which help define these things (e.g., how the church functions, if it is organized or chaotic, if the pastor is a servant or a dictator, if it meets the needs of its members or not, if it is evangelistic or apathetic, etc.), it is the pulpit ministry which the majority of people will see and be affected by on a weekly basis. Therefore if the church members see and hear a loving and gentle shepherd who loves Jesus and others, who desires to reach the lost, who is growing in his faith, who is honest, open and caring; this will help contribute to and instill these qualities in the lives of the hearers as they witness this week after week, month after month, and year after year. Yet on the other hand, if the members of the church see a

pastor who is harsh, cold, demanding, self-absorbed, lethargic, uncaring, etc., or any combinations of these things; then such characteristics will contribute to molding a church with this type of personality. This is why the pastor and evangelist need to consider what kind of impression they are making from the pulpit and what effect it will have in molding the church members and ultimately the church's personality, now in the present and continuing on into the future. For what they do and convey today will set the course of their church for years to come – five, ten, or even many more years into the future. Therefore they need to consider the fact that since people are creatures of habit, what they learn today may be very difficult to change in the future. This is especially true if the church is not conducting itself according to biblical standards.

The Pulpit Ministry Must be Strategic

Since it all starts in the pulpit, it is important for the pastor and evangelist to realize that the time spent in the pulpit needs to be strategic. For this to happen there needs to be planning and preparation. His messages must be biblically based, studied, and not just his opinion. He should not stand before his congregation to tickle their ears' but he is there to preach the authoritative Word of God properly and accurately. This means that before stepping behind the pulpit appropriate preparation is crucial. Therefore, the amount of time invested in the studying the Word of God and preparing messages will definitely have an impact on the results of his time in the pulpit. In most cases this will determine if those listening will truly hear from God or not, or if they will simply hear the pastor's thoughts on the topic at hand. Therefore the real issues are: did he study diligently; does he understand the passage he will preach in its proper contextual, historical, grammatical, normal and dispensational context; and will his application of the passage be according to what it actually teaches? These are crucial issues to his success. (For further information on this topic, please see the chapter in the appendix titled, "Bible Study Methods.")

In addition, his preparation or lack of it will have a definite effect on his ministry and church. Why? Because the church which hears good, solid, well-prepared sermons week after week will grow and become strong as one does who eats good, healthy, well-prepared meals. But the church

which week after week receives poorly prepared messages which are not presented in context, which are not the thoughts of God but instead the thoughts of man, will become malnourished and sick. Such a church will eventually waste away and die. This occurs because many church leaders do not understand the importance of their pulpit ministry. If they understood its importance, they would spend the necessary time and effort each week to prepare for this opportunity to speak on behalf of God. They would not wait until the end of the week to prepare with only a small amount of time remaining before Sunday morning. Instead this would be their first priority at the beginning of the week, making sure that throughout the week they set aside the appropriate amount of time necessary to prepare a message worthy of the God they represent when they stand behind the pulpit (cf., Mal. 1:6,8,14).

To be strategic in the pulpit, pastors and evangelists also need to decide what book of the Bible, what passage, or what topics God wants them to preach on. They also need to determine the length of time necessary in order to appropriately present an entire book, passage or topic (weeks or months). Oftentimes one message on a specific issue will not be enough. People may need to hear a series of sermons on the same topic before they will understand it thoroughly and its importance. As a result of continued reminders week after week, they will begin to apply these truths in their lives by making the necessary changes. A church which is an equipping center must have this approach to ministry because this is how to equip its members – through consistent and thorough teaching.

Another very important aspect of being strategic from the pulpit is the application of what is taught. If the church leadership and its members are not applying the Word, then the ultimate goal has not been achieved. This in essence is failure. James concurs. He said, “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (Jam. 1:22). When people simply hear the Word of God and think that this is enough, they are deluded. This is not enough; therefore, the goal of any teacher of the Word of God must be to help his hearers apply what they are learning. If this is not the goal, his task will not be accomplished and may simply end in futility. This is the reason teachers need to give application in their messages when they teach the Word. Their audience needs to understand ways in which they can apply the truths to their personal lives. Of course it

goes without saying that pastors, evangelists and the other leaders of the church are to personally live out what they preach and teach. They need to be the positive role models. This is important if they desire the members of their church to apply the Word of God to their own lives since people tend to imitate what they see. Giving them a good example will encourage them to follow the Word and help them know how to better apply it in their lives. Consequently, church leaders need to be like the Apostle Paul, a good example. He said, "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us" (Php. 3:17; cf., 1 Cor. 11:1). The goal and result of any teaching ministry should be changed lives, the lives of both the ones teaching and of those who are being taught. As James said in James 1:26: "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."

The Pulpit Ministry Establishes a Standard

Another vital aspect of the pastor and evangelist's pulpit ministry is that it establishes a standard for the congregation and other teachers and preachers in the church. If they hear well-prepared messages through which God speaks to them, then they will desire to attain this level in their personal preaching and teaching ministries. If however the preaching of the Word of God is not considered important and the messages reflect this, then this will be the standard to which they will become accustomed to and strive for. The members of a church will sense over time what is important and what is not important to the leaders of their church. This is why, as the prominent leader of the church, the pastor/evangelist needs to always exalt God and His Son, as well as His Word in and out of the pulpit. Please remember that the efforts which take place in the pulpit will have eternal results.

The Pulpit Ministry Must be Protected

Because the pulpit is such an important place and because of what it stands for, it must be protected! Pastors and evangelists need to be careful who they allow in it. They need to be careful what is taught in it. It needs to

be a place of respect. People will give the pulpit as much respect as does their leadership. They are to make sure that the pulpit is a place of strategic ministry, and that what comes from it is truth which is edifying, glorifying, proper and biblical. In too many churches the pulpit has become a place of storytelling, of sharing one's own opinions and/or philosophies, or a place from where people's ears are tickled. Instead it must be a place where men of God "preach the word" of God, being "ready in season and out of season" to "reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (2 Tim. 4:2). Through this ministry men and women of God will be equipped "for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17), which is necessary if one expects to mobilize his church to do evangelism.

Chapter 5.

BIBLE STUDY: A DEEPER LOOK INTO THE WORD

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You. Blessed are You, O Lord; teach me Your statutes.”

(Psalm 119:9-12)

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”

(2 Timothy 2:15)

The Importance of Bible Study

If the pastor and evangelist understand that their church needs to be an equipping center in which to prepare their church members to go out into the world to reach the lost, they need to understand the importance of Bible study. As the last chapter pointed out, the teaching ministry of the church begins in the pulpit. It is the most noticeable teaching ministry in the church which touches the largest number of people; therefore, it is of great importance. However the pulpit ministry generally is not the teaching ministry which will take the congregation to the deeper levels of their faith. This is true because the pulpit ministry has to be at a level which is understandable to and will impact the average church member. If the teaching is too deep, the preacher may lose the interest of the average person as he may not understand what is being taught. As a result, he may stop listening or eventually may even stop attending the church. This is not a problem in churches where the norm is messages which are superficial and are not written at a deep enough level. However this too is a problem because a more mature believer may also stop listening or even seek out another church where the sermons are more challenging to his faith.

For churches to take their members to a deeper level in the Word of God and in their faith, it is important that they provide ministries where the Bible is taught to deeper degrees. At these deeper levels students should

learn how to study the Bible and apply it to their lives. They should also learn how to ask probing questions about the Bible and how to find answers from the Scriptures. In addition, they should learn how to study the Bible systematically, in context, and of course regularly. Such training will provide them with the skills necessary to feed themselves spiritually with the Word of God. It should teach them how to keep their way pure and not sin against God. This deeper level of biblical understanding will also prepare them to be better servants in the church. As they grow in their understanding of the Word of God, they will have a greater impact in the lives of others, such as their family, friends, acquaintances, etc. It should also help them become more confident in their knowledge of the Word of God and therefore be less frightened to share their faith with unbelievers. This is why the Word of God is essential in mobilizing a church and for its spiritual growth.

Bible Study Helps People Grow in Their Faith

Proverbs 8 speaks of the value of wisdom, how it calls to the naive to understand it and blesses those who listen to it. Job 28 speaks about the difficulty of finding wisdom, yet when found its value is greater than earthly riches. Jointly these two chapters conclude that wisdom is calling out to be found; and though the process of searching for and finding it is difficult, it is of great importance and value to its seeker. Being that the Bible is God's source of wisdom for man, it is through Bible study that the seeker of wisdom can personally search for it, find it, and gain understanding. For just as a miner digs into the earth to find earthly riches, believers need to learn to dig into the Word of God to find God's riches. Though this process can be difficult and time-consuming, as with the miner looking for gold, the investment can be very rewarding. Therefore this is why the pastor and evangelist must involve their church members in Bible study, thereby teaching them how to study the Bible for themselves. A Chinese proverb says, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." Let me reword this proverb: "Preach a message to a man and you feed him for the day. Teach him to study the Bible and you feed him for a lifetime."

The difference between reading the Bible and Bible study can be compared to the difference between a pilot flying his plane while observing

the landscape from the air to the pilot landing his plane and observing everything from the ground. When one reads the Bible, it is as if he is in an airplane flying over various terrains viewing them from a distance. But for the pilot who lands his plane and walks the same terrain he only peered at through the plane's window, he is now able to take the time to closely examine it. From this new vantage point he is now able to look behind and under objects. He is able to pause and think about what he is seeing. He is able to stop and observe things that were from the air nothing but a blur. He is even able to stop and ask people on the ground questions about what he is observing. The wonderful thing about an in-depth investigation like this is that the pilot will discover things in his explorations that he could not have possibly seen from the air. The person who studies the Bible purposely takes the time to make observations, find answers, compare what he has found with other books of the Bible and make appropriate application. Doing this in many cases is the difference between night and day when it comes to truly understanding the Bible in context. Therefore, such is the experience of the one who studies the Bible versus the one who simply reads it. It is of course very good for a person to regularly read the Bible, however it is even better when he takes the time to study it for himself. (For further information on this issue, please see the chapter in the appendix titled, "Bible Study Methods.")

What Part Does Bible Study Play in Your Blueprint?

As was stated in Chapter 3, the pastor and evangelist need to prepare a blueprint for their church. They need to evaluate where the church is at spiritually and where they need to take it. If they work through this process, it will help them determine what topics need to be taught to the members of their church and what venue would be best for each study. For example, does the church need Bible studies on how to share one's faith, on family matters, women's roles in ministry, apologetics, how to handle money, how to live holy, how to memorize the Scriptures, etc.? What about the young people of the church? What do they need to understand more clearly? Maybe they need studies on topics such as what it means to be a servant, how to share one's faith, what it means to live holy, how to properly relate to the opposite sex, sex as God intended, homosexuality, abortion, what the

Bible says about alcohol, drugs, etc. These studies may help them better understand the issues they are facing in the world. What about the children of the church? What would be beneficial for them to learn? Possibly things such as: how to become a Christian, why God wants them to obey their parents, how to treat their friends, what is love, how to resolve conflicts, or important Bible stories, etc. The church which is an equipping center will use its time wisely each week to help people grow and become more like Christ. They need to consider the most effective ways possible in which to do this. They also need to be sure that providing Bible studies for everyone in their church is a part of their blueprint, for it is through the study of the Word of God that people will grow in wisdom and in their faith.

Bible studies can be offered in various venues and on various topics. When considering providing such studies, the location of where they will be taught needs to be considered as well. Would it be better if a certain study took place in the church building or in a home, outside at a park or at a camp, after a church service or after a volleyball game, in Sunday school or in the Sunday evening service (having a Bible study rather than preaching messages), or on a different night of the week. Sometimes a change of venue can make all the difference. Sitting in someone's home with a cup of tea versus sitting in a room at church might make the participants feel more comfortable and more at ease. This environment may be more conducive to interaction, learning and fellowship.

Bible Study Needs to be a Part of a Church's Blueprint

If the pastor and evangelist strongly desire the members of their church to be strong in the faith, mature, unified, and people who manifest Christ, then they need to find ways to encourage their church members to participate in Bible studies. This will bring their church to the next level of spiritual maturity. It will also enable their church to become the very things which Ephesians 4:13-16 defines as the goals and results of a mature church as discussed earlier in Chapters 1 and 3. Therefore hosting Bible studies by well-prepared and mature Bible teachers who can teach others how to study and practice what they have learned will help realize these goals. This will also help create a love and desire for God's Word in the church and in the individual lives of its members. The result may also

be a body of believers, who upon scattering from these studies will take the gospel to those around them who do not know Christ. Pastors and evangelists therefore need to instill into the members of their church a love for the Word of God, a desire to study it, practice it and teach it. Doing these things will assure them that their church will be blessed and used of God. (Please see the chapter in the appendix titled, “The Word of God in Ministry.”)

Chapter 6.

THE DISCIPLE: ENTRUSTING THOSE WHO CAN TEACH OTHERS

“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.”
(2 Timothy 2:2)

The Importance of Discipleship

Any church which desires to be a mature, reproducing church must implement a discipleship ministry. This ministry will assist members to progress to the next level in their spiritual development. This is the process whereby mature and well-prepared church leaders, teachers, disciplers, and strong followers of Christ will be developed. Because the discipleship process is more focused, thorough and efficient in providing the training needed to bring a believer to maturity, its end result will be more beneficial and complete than just leaving the process to chance.

The church which is an equipping center will make discipleship a priority because it desires this result – well-prepared disciples of Christ. The better designed and well run a discipleship program is, the more effective it will be. Yet no matter how difficult a church’s situation may be, its leaders must start this process sometime because any discipleship program is better than no discipleship program at all.

A discipleship program should have the goal of producing the kind of believers described by Paul in Colossians 2:6-7:

“Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk in Him, having been firmly rooted *and now* being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, *and* overflowing with gratitude.”

This command – “so walk in Him” – was given by Paul to encourage the Colossians to be strengthened in their faith to continue to live in and

imitate Christ. This is the objective of a discipleship program. Paul then gave them three reasons why this was an achievable objective. First, they had been “firmly rooted” in Him. This was a result of their salvation. They were “born again” (John 3:7, or born from above; “regenerated,” Titus 3:5), and as such they had been planted securely in Christ. Therefore they had the resources and capacity available as children of God to be able to live for Christ. The second reason they were able to walk in Christ was that they were being “built up in Him.” Being built up is the process a believer must go through to become mature and Christlike (this is the focus of Ephesians 4:11-16 as discussed earlier in Chapters 1 and 3). Third, they were able to walk in Christ because they were being “established in” their “faith” as a result of their being firmly rooted and built up in Christ. Being “established” has the idea of being made firm, stable and strengthened in their faith. This is the goal of a discipleship program so that believers are built up to maturity, being established in their faith, no longer being tossed to and fro as babes in Christ who are accustomed only to milk. Instead they will become mature men and women who are able to receive the meat of the Word (cf., 1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12-14). Such believers as these are vital to the church because they take their faith seriously, study their Bibles, are involved in service and share their faith with unbelievers. Producing such believers does not happen by chance, but is the result of planning and forethought.

Biblical Examples of Disciplers

“In the Scriptures there are examples of men who disciplined others. An early example is Moses who disciplined 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 disciplined 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 disciplined 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 conveyor 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."

Paul knew that in order for the church to continue to exist, to be healthy and strong, the next generation of leaders needed to be prepared. This is why Paul commanded Timothy to pass on what he had been taught to faithful men who were able to teach others. Paul wanted to make sure that what he had taught Timothy would be propagated. By doing this, Paul was assuring that those who teach the Word (pastors, evangelists, elders and teachers) would be prepared then, and as an ongoing process. This process is necessary today as well, for faithful teachers of the Word must be raised up who will accurately teach the Bible, will train others how to do

ministry, personally lead small groups, and prepare future church leaders who are mature and hold a biblical vision of the ministry. This process ensures a strong church which will make an impact for Christ.

When should this discipleship process begin? It should begin immediately after the spiritual birth of a new believer. In other words, when a person comes to faith in Christ, the equipping-center church will begin to instruct this new Christian by baptizing him and then teaching him to observe all that Christ commanded (Mat. 28:19-20). This is the beginning of the discipleship process for this individual, and it is to be a process which should continue throughout his life. The church which does not do this is like a mother who abandons her child after birth, not caring for, training or loving him. This is irresponsible and heartless. But for the believer who is taken by the hand immediately upon salvation and placed on the road to spiritual maturity will know no other way except the one shown to him by a loving, nurturing and caring church. Being disciplined will become a normal and regular part of this new believer's life. If this is the norm for all new believers, the benefits to them and the church will be great.

Characteristics of a Mature Disciple

One of the challenges for a disciple-making church is to determine what constitutes a well-rounded, spiritually mature disciple. This determination will vary from church to church due to various factors. In an attempt to address this issue, below are passages which define a mature believer in conjunction with other passages which give characteristics of what a mature Christian should exhibit. Therefore, necessary factors which must be considered, though not limited to, are:

- Maturity (defined) – Eph. 4:13-16; Col. 2:6-7
- Abiding in Christ – John 15:4-11
- Godly character qualities – 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9
- Using one's spiritual gift – 1 Cor. 12:7; Rom. 12:6
- Involved in evangelization – Mat. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8

In this profile of a mature believer, the characteristics which Paul lists in Ephesians 4 (discussed in Chapters 1 and 3) and Colossians 2 (discussed above) are included in this list. Implied in these two passages is that such a

person would be a man or woman of the Word, for without this one cannot come to maturity. (Read in the appendix, “The Word of God in Ministry” for further information on the necessity of the Word of God.)

Another mark of a mature man is his capacity to abide in Christ and in His love. A person who abides in Christ and in whom the words of Christ abide will bear much fruit, but one who abides little will not bear much fruit, if any. Bearing much fruit glorifies God and is an affirmation that a person is a disciple of Christ. It is also essential for answered prayer, which is another aspect of a mature believer – that he seeks God through prayer and receives answers from Him.

In addition, a mature believer must manifest the character qualities found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These passages list qualities which a mature man is to have who “aspires to the office of overseer” (1 Tim. 3:1), thus these are qualities which should be discernible in the life of any mature man. Because they are qualities of maturity which are not related to gender, they are then to be characteristics which a mature woman is to manifest as well.

In regards to another characteristic of a mature disciple, 1 Corinthians 12:7 and Romans 12:6 clearly establish that every believer has been given a spiritual gift which he is to exercise for the common good of the church. It is reasonable to assume that a mature man should know what his spiritual gift is, resulting from time and experience, and that he would be using this gift in his service for Christ. Being a servant is what Christ called His followers to do. He made this clear when He washed His disciples’ feet (John 13:12-17). Therefore, a mature believer should be using his spiritual gift in the active service of others.

Another distinctive of a mature believer which is reasonable to assume is that since Christ gave a command to reach the world with the gospel (Mat. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8), he would be involved in evangelism. He would both be praying for and actively involved in trying to reach the lost for Christ. As an ambassador of Christ to the lost (2 Cor. 5:20), he too, as the Father, would not desire “any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9), and thus would be involved in the process of reaching them.

As stated earlier, the characteristics of a mature man are not limited to the five factors listed above, but they should at least be determining factors. Nonetheless, when considering what the New Testament profile should be

of a mature disciple of Christ, pastors and evangelists need to take this into account when preparing their blueprint. Doing so will give them not only a picture of what a mature believer should look like, but also a goal to strive for as well. As they move toward this goal, they will incorporate into their blueprint those steps necessary to build a strong, healthy church. It will also enable them to create a church which yields believers who know how to reach the world for Christ and have the desire to do so.

The Necessity of Discipleship

Discipleship is crucial if a church desires to make an impact for Christ. It is also vital if it desires greater levels of spiritual maturity for its members, desires to raise up church leaders who are mature and will carry on this vision in the future, desires to raise up well-prepared men and women who are capable in serving Christ as well as others in and outside of the church, and desires to help reach the world for Christ. These things will only happen if the church takes 2 Timothy 2:2 seriously: “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.”

Chapter 7.

THE CHURCH: ITS NEED TO BECOME ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN

"Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses
of those without strength and not just please ourselves.

Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good,
to his edification. For even Christ did not please Himself;
but as it is written, "The reproaches of those
who reproached You fell on Me."

(Romans 15:1-3)

Preface to This Chapter

The main theme of this book is the need for churches to equip their members upon gathering so that they will be involved in the process of evangelizing when scattering. Though this chapter may seem to deviate from this theme, this is not the case.

Simply put, a healthy church will produce healthy members and an unhealthy church, unhealthy members. Therefore the environment which a church generates – its church culture – will influence its members positively or negatively by its example. This is why it is important for a church to provide a healthy church culture for its members. A church which is an equipping center will naturally generate this as a result of its strong teaching ministry and focus on the application of the Word of God. A church which is not yet an equipping center may not have an environment that is nourishing and nurturing, possibly not creating an atmosphere which is catalytic for growth. Therefore if church leaders are not evangelistically conscious, desiring to understand and reach out in to the contemporary culture of the lost, how can they expect their members to do this? Church members will manifest what they see, hear, learn and experience. Therefore the purpose of this chapter is to help church leaders understand what their church needs to do in order to be a place that is evangelistic in nature and

fosters involvement in evangelism by its members. To address this issue, the following topics will be discussed:

- Understanding the times
- The need to build bridges and not walls
- Becoming all things to all men
- The ways in which Christians are to be different
- The necessary approach needed when sharing the gospel
- The gospel message, what it is and what it is not
- Analyze those you desire to reach! Make a blueprint! Execute it!
- Respecting others is important

Understanding the Times

Hidden near the end of the first twelve chapters of genealogies and lists of names in 1 Chronicles is a very interesting verse which speaks about the tribe of Issachar. It says of this tribe, which was present when the kingdom of Saul was turned over to David: "Of the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do, their chiefs *were* two hundred; and all their kinsmen *were* at their command" (1 Chron. 12:32). Issachar was a tribe that understood the times in which they lived and also had the knowledge of what Israel should do. In other words, they were men of wisdom, men who had knowledge and who knew how to apply that knowledge to the situation they as a nation were in.

A church which is an equipping center is one which realizes that to reach the lost for Christ its leaders and members need to understand the times in which they live and how to respond to them. To be such a church means that it must not be afraid of its contemporary culture, but instead contemplate it and establish a plan on how to penetrate and influence it with the gospel. To ignore its contemporary culture and act as if all the problems and sin it generates does not and will not affect it is a naive response. Churches are impacted by the contemporary culture they are in, but how much they are affected and to what extent depends a lot on their leaders, whether they are proactive or inactive. So if a church decides to ignore its culture, tries to be completely separate from and disconnected to it, this will only make it ineffective because it will not be acting as salt and light in a decaying world (cf. Mat. 5:13-16). Therefore churches need to

be proactive. They cannot just react to what is going on around them, but instead they need to be a stimulus to positive change through the power of the gospel. Also many churches working together can be a strong force which can penetrate and influence a city, a state, a region, and even a country.

To be proactive and a stimulus in the world, churches need to turn to God for wisdom which He promises to provide (Jam. 1:5-8). During this time of seeking God (over days, weeks or even months) church leaders need to ask Him to help them understand the times in which they live, what He wants them to do, and how He wants them to do it. As they gain this knowledge and wisdom, they need to interact with their contemporary culture, developing a specific plan on how to impact it both corporately (as a church) and through its individual members. In other words, church leaders need to determine what teaching and training they need to provide to prepare their members for this challenge. They also should determine what they need to do corporately to make a difference in their community and world. These are important issues which must be addressed.

The Need to Build Bridges and Not Walls

When contemplating the times and their contemporary culture, it is important for church leaders to look for proactive ways in which they can build bridges to reach the lost. Though there are churches which actively try to build bridges and open their arms to the lost, oftentimes unbelievers encounter churches which have unknowingly built walls. The walls may be barriers created by apathy, a lack of vision, living in the past and not willing to change, a tendency to operate by rules, or simply not being willing to accept unbelievers the way Jesus accepted them – unconditionally.

All of the above are unhealthy conditions for a church. Such churches are sick and in need of a physician. Because of their condition, they are not able to help others spiritually as they are in such great need of spiritual help themselves. An unbeliever who begins to attend such a church may feel unwelcome and unimportant. Since this church has little to offer him, he may leave and may never seek out another church again, believing that they are all the same. These kinds of churches have lost their focus, that of Christ being their first love. They have drifted away and are stuck

in a rut, simply “doing” church and not functioning like a church should – as a living, growing organism, as the body of Christ. Thus they exist, almost lifeless, subsisting, yet without vision or hope. Such churches can easily become ritualistic. In other words they just do the same things week after week, having lost their purpose for existence, but they continue on. Becoming comfortable in their indifference, the uncomfortable and difficult things like evangelism, Bible study, serving others, etc., are done less and less as they increasingly expand their comfort zone. The result is that the members of such churches lose their zeal and vision for God and His work, consequently becoming less and less fruitful. These churches become like worthless branches which have dried up and are of no use to anyone (cf., John 15:5-6).

One wall churches may build is by becoming ingrown and/or inwardly focused. When this occurs, they have a difficult time relating to and integrating people into their church who are not like them. People who are different may find themselves not warmly received, unless of course they later conform to become like the people of the church. Such churches – unlike Jesus – may become places that are not friends of tax-gatherers and sinners (cf., Mat. 11:19; Luke 15:1-2), that do not accept the prostitute (cf., Luke 7:36-50), the adulteress (cf., John 4:16-18), those who listen to rock and roll music, who smoke, who have colored hair and body piercings, or are of different races, countries or cultures, etc. Sadly, these churches no longer understand the great commission of Jesus: “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. 28:19-20).

Another major wall is one of rules, practices and traditions. Even though to some extent these are necessary, churches need to be sure that they do not create a church culture where a manmade system becomes more important than a dynamic relationship with God, a true devotion to Christ, adherence to the Bible, or a desire to reach the lost for Christ. When such a system is created, churches become more concerned about the system than about God. They end up turning their center of attention inward toward their own needs and desires. Being creatures of habit, they end up creating a church environment where clear-cut standards and black-and-white thinking characterize the church and its members. This can produce pride

and rigidity which in turn may produce members and a church culture which is unhealthy, inflexible, or pharisaic in nature. Protecting and maintaining its system becomes its focus, even to the point where it can become rude and unloving toward those it is supposed to be reaching. Churches such as these generally are not able to reach their contemporary cultures in a natural constructive manner. Their methods and message are more rigid and focused on the task, duty and conformity to their system than on the lost. A church like this can thrive for different reasons. One may be that it is the only church around for people to attend or the better choice of what is available. Also it may be the church that people grew up in and therefore would never think of leaving. Another reason a church is able to amass members who are in agreement with its system is because they believe that this is the way God desires a church to function. Therefore they are willing to protect and even contend with others to maintain it; but once again such a church has lost its way.

It is interesting to note that after the Jerusalem Council convened, as a result of Pharisees who insisted that Gentile believers conform to the Law of Moses (Acts 15:1, 5), they decided the following about these Gentiles:

²⁸“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: ²⁹ that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell.” (Acts 15:28-29)

One of Peter's arguments which led to this decree was: “Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?” (Acts 15:10). Of course with this decree came the unwritten expectation that the Gentile churches would live in accordance with the moral law of the Old Testament and all new revelation which they would receive from the Apostles and prophets. But beyond that, the Holy Spirit and Council added no other rules than the two listed. They did not want to burden these believers as was the practice of the scribes and Pharisees (Mat. 23). Therefore what was expected of them was adherence to morality, to the

practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and to these dietary restrictions. That was all!

This is a good model for churches today – that they operate according to the principles of Scripture and not by the rules, practices and traditions one may fabricate from the Scriptures. Churches are to conduct themselves in opposition to the practices of the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' time. Jesus admonished them as follows:

⁸“Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.” ⁹He was also saying to them, ‘You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.’” (Mark 7:8-9)

Such behavior makes churches inadequate to be able to minister to the actual needs of people. They can end up focusing much of their energy on insignificant practices while neglecting “the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness,” straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!” (Mat. 23:23-24). To keep this from happening, Jesus must remain the first love of a church (Rev. 2:1-7), not rules, practices, traditions, people's comfort zones, church cliques, etc. Churches which focus on these things will begin to die and become useless.

Becoming All Things to All Men

What strategy should churches have in regards to reaching out to the lost? The answer is given in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23:

¹⁹“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; ²¹to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. ²²To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to

all men, so that I may by all means save some. ²³I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.”

In this passage Paul, though he was free because he was a Roman citizen and enslaved to no man, purposely made himself a “slave to all” (vs. 19). How did he do this? By becoming a Jew to a Jew, one who was under the Law to those under the Law, to those without law as without law, to the weak by becoming weak (vs. 20-22). In other words, he as a free man acted as a slave by deliberately giving up his own personal rights and desires for the purpose of becoming like those he was trying to reach. Thus Paul said, “I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some” (vs. 22). Paul willingly gave up things which were familiar, comfortable, and maybe even important to him so that he could become like those he was trying to reach for Christ. Yet please note that he did this without compromising his faith; for he said, “though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ” (vs. 21). Consequently becoming all things to all men does not mean changing one’s doctrine; that is, unless one discovers that what he has previously believed is incorrect.

Paul’s labor, conduct and attitude in this matter are a model for a church and its members today. To reach people with the gospel, believers and churches should not create distance between themselves and unbelievers or construct barriers, but instead establish common ground. Ways need to be found where a church and its members can connect with unbelievers. To implement this model of ministry, a church must begin by first getting on its knees and asking God to strip it of those practices, attitudes, preferences, traditions, incorrect understandings of Scripture, rules, habits, etc., which are detrimental to its ability to function as a church. It needs to focus on the bare essentials of biblical truth as its foundation. To be able to accomplish this, believers must be willing to give up those things which are familiar and even important to them so that they are able to become all things to all men. This is essential because frequently things they routinely do keep them from fulfilling the Scriptures.

When church leaders make the necessary changes to their church culture so that their church becomes more effective, this may very well cause conflict in their church. Though conflict may occur, the end result

will be worth the pains of change because honoring God is much more important than honoring the ways of men. The wise pastor and evangelist should make the necessary changes only after much prayer and having carefully studied the Scriptures. As a result of this process, they should be able to determine what aspects of their church culture should remain and which should change or be eliminated. Only those things which their church requires to operate in a healthy manner should be allowed to continue. In conjunction with this reevaluation, their church members need to be instructed on the reasons for the changes. This should be done through messages from the pulpit, in Bible studies, discipleship groups, congregational meetings, etc., using the Word of God to teach the proper way in which a church is to function, thus laying the path to church renewal.

Once these changes have been made, a church should analyze the worldview of the contemporary culture in which God has placed it. To be able to impact their contemporary culture they need to understand it. A church must understand those they are trying to reach and why they think and act as they do. Churches should not assume that they automatically understand their contemporary culture, for they may not. They may have lost touch with the outside world, having isolated themselves for a long period of time as many churches have done. Such churches can be like private clubs which operate obliviously to the outside world. Another reason for having lost touch may be that though a church sees what its contemporary culture is doing, it may not have taken the time to evaluate it. Understanding the biblical perspective of man (that he is a sinner and his associated characteristics), along with the reasons why their contemporary culture is as it is, can help church leaders understand behavior patterns, trends, movements, fads, etc. When a church understands these aspects of its contemporary culture, it will be better able to penetrate and influence it with the gospel.

In response to what was just stated, some may ask: "But even if believers do not understand their contemporary culture, isn't the Bible totally capable of penetrating and influencing it?" Yes it is. It is totally sufficient. Yet, unless Christians make an effort to build bridges to the lost, unbelievers may never hear the Word of God which is able to penetrate and change their lives. Romans 10 makes this clear:

“How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!” However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” (Rom. 10:14-17)

Thus believers need to build relationships so that they have an avenue to take the good news to those who need it. To help do this they need to become all things to all men. To become all things to all men they need to understand their contemporary culture and/or the culture of those they are attempting to reach. This knowledge combined with making oneself a slave to them will result in winning more for Christ (1 Cor. 9:19).

The Apostle Paul took culture and people's belief systems into consideration. A few examples which demonstrate this are when he had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:1-3), when he was in Athens speaking to the Athenians about their unknown God (Acts 17:16,22-23), when he purified himself before entering the temple and paid for those who were completing a vow (Acts 21:17-26), and when he wrote to Titus about the Cretans being liars, evil and lazy (Titus 1:12-13). The process of studying its contemporary culture and being sensitive to it will help a local church know how to become a “Jew to a Jew and a Gentile to a Gentile,” and thus how to reach people for Christ.

Today the world is rapidly changing, and with the ease of travel, churches are finding their communities changing as well. Consequently, reaching their contemporary culture may mean reaching out to others who are different than themselves and different than those whom they had previously ministered to. These churches may find themselves in a situation where their church culture is now very different than the surrounding culture, being disconnected from those they desire to reach. To rectify this situation churches will need to transform themselves into something they currently are not; that is, if they want to reach these people for Christ. This of course may be very difficult yet necessary. A church which finds itself

in this situation may have to work very hard to become the kind of church which can actually say as the Apostle Paul, “I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some” (vs. 22). Church leaders should consider that God established their church where it is located knowing that these changes would one day occur. They must also remember that “the Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). God wants their church and its members to reach these people. To do that He also desires that their members become all things to all men.

If a church desires to become all things to all men, this means that its members must learn to be considerate of those they are trying to reach. They need to take into consideration such things as their dietary laws (e.g., Orthodox Jews and Muslims do not eat pork or other foods considered unclean; Hindus only eat chicken and fish, etc.). It may also mean being understanding of their holy days (e.g., lent for Catholics and Orthodox believers; Ramadan and Friday worship for Muslims, Saturday worship and Hanukkah for Jews, etc.). Depending upon a church’s situation and location, it may find it advantageous to provide a separate worship service for those it is trying to reach to accommodate their day of worship (e.g., like a Saturday evening service to reach Catholics). If a church is located in a part of a city where there are a lot of restaurants or markets, it might hold worship services on Monday or Tuesday when most people would not have to work. If a church is surrounded by people of different ethnicity, it may need to learn about their customs and incorporate some of them into its worship services or practices. If a church is trying to reach youth, it may have to provide two worship services; one that is contemporary for them and one that is not as contemporary for the older generation. In other words, churches simply need to analyze the contemporary culture they are in and look for ways that they and their members can penetrate and influence it with the gospel.

At this juncture please remember that when becoming all things to all men so that believers may by all means save some does not mean compromising their faith. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:21, “...though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ...” Consequently Christians are not to go against the Word of God or their conscience when

becoming all things to all men. Also they are not to change their doctrine, unless of course they discover what they previously believed does not align with the Scriptures. Becoming all things to all men is to be strictly practiced only in those areas where a believer has the freedom to accommodate the belief system of those they are attempting to reach for Christ.

Now the question is: "What changes should a church be willing to make to reach unbelievers for Christ?" Other questions to consider are: "What things are its members willing to give up?" "What are those things which are so precious and dear to them that they are neither willing to change nor discard in order to reach the lost for Christ?" They are to imitate the Apostle Paul! Make the necessary changes! Move toward the goal! Then one day all involved will be greatly rewarded.

The Ways in Which Christians Are to be Different

Having discussed what it means to become all things to all men, a discussion should follow on how Christians are to be different from the world. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is healthy to reevaluate one's contemporary culture. It is also necessary that once one has analyzed it in comparison to his church culture and distinguished the differences, that the gaps be bridged. How far apart these two cultures are is an important issue which must be considered.

Though Christians are to become all things to all men and be willing to conform their lives to those they are attempting to reach, they are still to be aliens in this world. They are to be aliens in such areas as their morals, their behavior and in what they believe. They are to be distinct; different. Peter made this clear to the recipients of his first epistle when he wrote, "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. 2:11-12). As believers look for ways to be proactive and engage their contemporary culture to penetrate and influence it with the gospel, they need to make sure that: 1) they are being all things to all men in their relationships, and 2) they are godly in their behavior. These two aspects are necessary for believers to be distinct and to be

able to penetrate and influence it. These are also essential if they desire to generate a new church culture or regenerate an existing one in order to reach the outside world. However, churches must never compromise morality, godly behavior or the Word of God in order to reach the world. To do so is unacceptable and reprehensible.

There are other ways in which Christians are to be different in contrast to the world. They, as Jesus did, are to treat unbelievers with love, respect and acceptance. Again like Jesus, they are not to accept nor approve of sin and godless lifestyles. In other words, being all things to all men does not mean that believers are to participate in the sins of the world with unbelievers whom they are trying to reach for Christ (Rom. 6:1-2; 6:15; Eph. 4:17-20). Believers should be unique in their faith and hope in the face of life's challenges as they trust in the living God. They should be distinct as people who manifest love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (cf., Gal. 5:21-22). Christians should also be viewed as unusual while unbelievers watch them living according to the new commandment which Christ gave – that they love one another as Christ loves them, which is unconditionally. But is this what unbelievers see today in many churches and in the lives of their members? Or do they see apathy, a lifeless faith, pride and hypocrisy, even the practice of sin? Christians are to be different, but different in the right ways and focusing on what is truly important. They are not to be self-righteous as the scribes and Pharisees were.

The Necessary Approach Needed When Sharing the Gospel

Another aspect of becoming all things to all men is knowing how to interact appropriately with unbelievers. When the Apostle Paul asked the Colossians for prayer regarding his ministry of evangelism, he instructed them on how to view the task of reaching non-Christians:

²“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of* thanksgiving; ³praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; ⁴that I may make it clear in the way I ought

to speak. ⁵Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. ⁶Let your speech always be with grace, *as though* seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.” (Col. 4:2-6)

These verses contain important principles which must be applied by those who desire to be effective in evangelism. These principles on how to reach the lost can be derived from Paul’s instructions as follows:

- Pray for an open door for evangelism
- Pray about speaking clearly about Christ
- Act wisely in your interactions
- Make the most of every opportunity
- Be careful how you speak, making sure that:
 - your speech is always with grace
 - *as though* it were seasoned with salt
 - so that you will know how you should respond to each person

This passage clearly shows how believers are to look at each and every opportunity with an unbeliever – as an opportunity to reach him for Christ. The church which is an equipping center will teach and prepare its members to view evangelism in this way. Evangelism should not be viewed as an opportunity to pounce on an unbeliever with the gospel like a cat on a mouse. Instead it should be prayerful, thought-out, and considerate. It should be a time of listening, asking questions, and listening some more in order to foster trust and eventually establish a relationship. It is a time to show kindness and concern, laugh and maybe even shed a tear. If done correctly, the unbeliever will have a desire to listen more at a later time because of the graceful speech (like salt) which seasoned their conversation. Church members should be instructed in how to reach the lost in such a manner. It should not be expected or left to chance that they understand this approach to reaching the lost. Of course this approach may not always produce this desired outcome however.

Another thing to consider when sharing the gospel is not to focus on issues which are non-essentials. A Christian should not be waving banners about the fact that he does not drink, smoke or swear, his political allegiances, that he is trying to save the earth’s ecosystem, that he is fighting against abortion or homosexual rights, which denomination he is a

member of, etc., as if these kinds of things make him a Christian, for they do not. What makes him a Christian is Jesus Christ who saved him when by faith he accepted Him as his Savior. Though some of the things listed above may be wonderful results of salvation, they are not things which can save a person. Actually statements like these may even become barriers to the gospel. They may come across as prideful statements. Someone may like smoking and drinking, or maybe he is even a member of a different political party; and if he hears things like this, he may not allow you to share what he really needs to hear, the gospel message. In reality, these other things are unimportant in contrast to the unbeliever's main need which is that he is without Christ and on his way to hell. For even if he can be brought to the point where he no longer smokes, drinks and swears, changes his political party, or stops committing other sins which he is involved in, he has not been saved. He is still without Christ. Therefore a person's need of salvation must be the primary focus of an encounter with him. Also please consider that there are many people who do not smoke and drink or even swear who are not Christians. Though a Christian may have made these choices as a result of his Christian beliefs, unbelievers obviously make the same decisions for other reasons. There are Christians who are members of differing political parties and/or denominations, with both groups honestly saying that they are members of these because of their faith and beliefs. Consequently, these issues are non-essentials when it comes to the sharing of the gospel as they are never mentioned in the Bible in relationship to the gospel. Let's now focus on the main issue which is our next topic of discussion.

The Gospel Message, What it is and What it is Not

When sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with someone, what should be the focus of this message? Should it be that the person being witnessed to is a wicked wretched sinner who will one day die and spend eternity in hell? Or maybe it should be that he who accepts Christ will have a wonderful life and then after he dies will go to heaven. This is an important question because frequently the gospel is presented in a way which is skewed, being off-center from the essential elements. This is why it is important to see how the gospel is presented in the Scriptures.

The New Testament passage which summarizes the gospel message is recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 by Paul:

¹“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, ²by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. ³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.”

Paul reminded the Corinthians of the gospel message which he preached to them. Before stating the actual message, he said to them that it was this message:

- which also you received
- in which also you stand
- by which also you are saved

Paul is affirming that the message which he preached to them they believed and accepted (“received”), they continued to live in accordance with (“stand”), and were saved by. It is then that he adds the qualifier, “if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.” What is so important about this affirmation is that the gospel message which Paul made known to them is what saved them, that is of course if they actually believed it. Consequently it is to be understood that the message which Paul delivered to them is accurate and complete in its content. Therefore the words which follow in this passage are the essential components which should be shared with those who do not know Christ so that they too may believe in Him and receive Him. It is then that Paul wrote, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received” that:

1. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures
2. He was buried
3. He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures
4. He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve

What we see in these four points of the gospel message are six aspects of a complete gospel presentation:

1. Christ died for our sins
2. People are sinners
3. Christ's death was according to God's plan
4. Christ was buried
5. Christ rose again on the third day according to God's plan
6. Christ was seen alive after His death and resurrection by His disciples

These six aspects of the four-point summary are what believers should focus on when presenting the gospel to unbelievers. Of course other passages can and should be used from the Bible to prove each of these points, but these are the essentials which should be the core of the message. Things such as our denomination, which version of the Bible we prefer, that we do not drink alcohol or use tobacco, etc., are not the issue. The issue is simply that Christ came to earth, died for our sins, was buried, rose again, and was seen by His disciples after His resurrection. That's all. When looking at the sermons which are recorded in the book of Acts in 2:14-36, 3:11-26, 10:34-43, and 13:16-41, each of these elements are found, either directly or implied. Though in Acts 26:12-23 Paul does not mention Christ's burial, the fact that he mentions His resurrection implies a burial. Paul also does not mention that Christ appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, but instead states that Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 26:16). Therefore these are the fundamental guidelines which should be used when presenting the gospel.

Analyze Those You Desire to Reach! Make a Blueprint! Execute it!

For a church to be effective in evangelism it needs to be strategic. To do this it would be helpful for a church to prepare an outreach blueprint. In this process it should follow similar steps like when preparing a blueprint for its renewal; but in this case it will be for the purpose of reaching people in its neighborhood, village or city with the gospel of Christ.

The first thing church leaders need to do is to determine their target group, asking themselves, "Who are the people that we desire to reach?" This may include families, singles, professionals, young adults, children, a specific ethnic or religious group, people in a specific geographical area, etc. Once a target group has been determined, it would be beneficial to see if there are any demographic studies available on them. Maybe the

government has information available as the result of a census or some other type of survey. Also, if the people to be reached are not a part of the culture where a church is located, information might be available on the internet to help define who they are, about their culture and what they believe. A library may have books with this information as well. These methods can also be used to better understand what the target group believes about God, family issues, etc. Considering questions like the following may be helpful in this process as well:

- What are their main religion(s) and beliefs?
- On what day do they worship?
- What are their customs when worshipping?
- What cultural issues need to be taken into consideration when trying to reach them?
- What traditions are important to them?
- What do they do for work?
- What is their main mode of transportation (personal vehicles, use public transportation, walking, etc.)?
- Are they professionals or nonprofessionals?
- What are their political views?
- Are they intellectual, uneducated or somewhere in between?
- What are their main types of recreation?
- Are they mainly families, elderly or singles?
- Are they wealthy, middle class or poor?
- What are the main types of problems they struggle with (economic, political, environmental, etc.)?
- What are the main sins they are involved in (alcoholism, sexual immorality, drug use and/or sales, wife and/or child abuse, etc.)
- What are the main things which interest them?
- What are the main things they are concerned about?
- What main need(s) (struggles, concerns, sin) can the church meet in this community?
- How can the church become involved in the community to meet this need(s)?
- What ministry can the church offer to the community to meet these needs?
- What rules, practices or traditions must the church change or stop

doing in order to be effective in reaching these people and meeting their needs?

- What new practices does the church need to incorporate in order to be able to be effective in reaching them for Christ?
- How will the gospel message be incorporated into these ministries in such a way that they will clearly hear it yet without turning them away from the church?

More than likely the answers to many of these questions will not be difficult to ascertain since in most cases a church will try to reach those who are of its own culture. Though this is the case, it is still beneficial to take the time and consider such questions. Also when doing this analysis, look for positive aspects of the people being studied. Do not consider just the negative characteristics of their culture as a focal point to use in reaching them (being their needs). Knowing positive characteristics of their culture can also be useful, speaking to them about those things which you admire. Everyone likes to hear something encouraging about his culture. Once one has sufficient information about those he is trying to reach and their needs, then a blueprint can be prepared.

In creating the blueprint, start by looking at ways the church can effectively reach into the community. What needs do they have? What can it do to become a part of their community? How can it begin to build friendships? What positive aspects of their community can the church utilize to reach them? What are ways it can help them as individuals, couples and families? When church leaders determine these kinds of things, they should also consider:

- What the church can begin to do to penetrate and influence this community, such as:
 - Celebrate with them on their holidays
 - Involve its members in their parades, celebrations, etc.
 - Congratulate them on special events, achievements, etc.
 - Hold special church services just for them
 - Do things in the community which will show love and concern for them
- How church members can be trained and prepared for this task through:
 - The pulpit ministry

- Bible studies
- Discipleship groups
- Specialty training
- Whether the church needs to make provisions to reach these people with things such as:
 - Money
 - Food or clothing
 - Holding special worship services which coincide better with their schedules
 - Renting a place to meet in other than the church building
 - Etc.
- If there are specific individuals with whom the church needs to build relationships to enable it to get access into this community, such as:
 - Government officials
 - Local community leaders
 - Business people
 - Etc.

Once the blueprint is developed, then it is time to implement it. Step-by-step work through the plan to begin to reach these people for Christ. As with any plan, first attempts may not succeed as hoped. When this happens, do not be afraid to adjust the plan and continue to move forward. The key is to keep moving. Don't stop! Just look to God for victory.

Respecting Others is Important

The more church members know about the people and their culture whom they are trying to reach, the more effective they will be in evangelizing them. Treating them with the love and respect they deserve as people created and loved by God will go a long way in reaching them with the gospel. Having an attitude of superiority will be sensed by them and only end in futility. The members of a church need to remember that they too were once without Christ, hopeless and heading down the wrong path. Therefore they need to have the same compassion which God and the person or people who shared Christ with them had for them.

Chapter 8.

THE NEXT STEP: MOVING FORWARD

"Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 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."
(1 Peter 5:1-4)

A Charge to Move Forward

Sometimes after reading a book you can become overwhelmed with all that is presented. Being unsure of where to, or maybe even how to begin, nothing gets accomplished. My desire is that this not be the case with you in regards to this book, which is why this chapter is included. My hope is that you will apply the principles presented so that your church will become all that it can be for Christ. If your church is already doing the things presented in this book, then my desire is that you will be even more effective in the future. If your church is not a teaching center which focuses on equipping your members for service, this can change. Actually it must change if you want your church to be a place that makes a great impact in all its areas of ministry, including evangelism. This is not an option.

Likely the transformation of your church will not occur quickly. It will take time, but this should be expected since it took a long time for your church to get to where it is at now. If you go into your church and try to turn everything around overnight, it could fail for various reasons. One reason is that when people do things in a hurry, they generally do not take the time necessary to think things through thoroughly. Another reason may be that some people in the church may not be able to adjust well to a

lot of change quickly even though many others may gladly welcome the improvements. A further reason it may fail is that your church may not have the trained people and/or infrastructure in place in order to handle the needed changes. This however can be developed over time. It is better to lay a firm foundation slowly that will produce results than to rush forward in an unprepared manner and then fail. A failure could cause discouragement from which the church may not quickly recover. It could also be a reason why in the future your church may not want to attempt change again. So you need to be wise in this process. Therefore, take things at a pace that most people can tolerate and make sure that you never stop moving nor become complacent, but continue to press forward.

The Process

Working through this process of making your church an equipping center which produces mature disciples is a logical process. God has not given you an impossible task, but one that can be accomplished through His power over time. Though some churches may accomplish this task quicker than others due to factors like: the maturity of their church, the number of members it has, the resources available to it, its type of leadership style, etc.; leaders of churches where the progress is slow should not become discouraged. Discouragement is difficult to deal with, especially if your biggest discouragers are members or even board members of your own church who do not want to change. Yet, this is often a stark reality. Though they may disagree with and discourage you regularly, stay on your knees, keep looking up and continue moving forward. There also may be instances when those who do not want to change may cause problems, may not become a part of the process, or in some cases may even leave the church. In the case of those who try to disrupt the process of change which the church is going through, being divisive or disruptive, church leaders may need to consider disciplining the offenders (cf., Titus 3:9-10; Mat. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5), though this should be a last resort. God wants you to be successful, and He can make the difficulties surmountable. Just be patient and faithful. Faithfulness is what God will reward, so be dedicated to the process and the task at hand.

In this book few illustrations were given as to how to apply the principles

presented. The reason for this is that each church is different in many ways, such as where it is located, its leaders, leadership style, its members, the communities it desires to reach, etc. This combination of factors makes each church absolutely unique from another. Therefore, how one church does things may completely differ from how another church down the road should do it. Prayer and the Word of God, in conjunction with the principles presented in this book, should be sufficient to take your church forward toward the goal. God will give you the needed wisdom (Jam. 1:5-8).

This being true, the process of developing an effective church is the same for all churches. There are five main steps with various secondary stages a church must work through to do this. In conjunction with them, there is also one warning church leaders need to keep in mind as follows:

- STEP 1:** Seek God
- STEP 2:** Seek the counsel of others
- STEP 3:** Evaluate your church!
- STEP 4:** Make a blueprint!
- STEP 5:** Execute it!
- WARNING:** Expect Satan to attack!

These steps and the warning will now be discussed in more detail.

Step 1: Seek God

The first step in this process is to seek God through prayer and His Word. You should gather your church leaders, or maybe even your entire church to pray and fast, asking God for wisdom and direction. God knows what your church needs and what He desires it to do, thus this is the first place to begin. As James said: "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (1:5); God will give your church the wisdom it needs. Then James adds that it needs to make sure it does what God tells it to do: "But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (1:6-8). The last thing any church should ever do is to ask God for direction and then not follow it once He has given it.

Such a church should not expect to receive anything from God. Therefore make sure you plan to follow what God shows your church before you ask Him. If you do want to know this information, then be assured that seeking God will guarantee effective results. Proverbs 16:3 states: "Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established." Understanding this truth in combination with Proverbs 16:9 ("The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps"), you can be assured that God will lead you in the proper direction to achieve the desired result. Even if you decide to do something other than what God wants yet are truly seeking Him fully, He will direct your steps.

STEP 2: Seek the Counsel of Others

Often God uses other people and/or circumstances to direct situations and give guidance. So as you seek God, it is also important to seek the counsel of others through whom you may gain more insight and maybe even differing perspectives. Proverbs 15:22 tells us: "Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed." Therefore you should be open to the input of others because their advice may help you formulate your plan, and therefore grant it success.

It may be helpful to seek out different resources to gain the experience of others, some of which may include:

- Church leaders (in your church or in other churches)
- Experts in the field of church growth
- Experts' knowledge about people groups (even your own nationality and race) that you desire to reach for Christ
- Government demographics of the people you desire to reach
- Books and internet articles on related topics
- Investigating what others in your country or in other countries are doing or have done in these areas of ministry, evangelism, etc.
- Attend informational seminars and conferences

Proverbs 13:10 speaks to the benefit of this when it says: "Through insolence comes nothing but strife, but wisdom is with those who receive counsel." The counsel of others and not pride or being self-willed ("insolence") will make this process much more efficient and productive, and therefore successful.

STEP 3: Evaluate Your Church!

As was discussed in Chapter 3, the wise builder will evaluate his church. Thus you and your church leaders need to determine:

- The spiritual condition of your church
- The strengths of your church
- The weaknesses of your church
- A profile of what the average member of your church is characterized by
- A scriptural profile of what a mature believer should be characterized by
- A scriptural profile of what a mature church should be characterized by
- The changes which need to take place to make the proposed profiles a reality

Analyzing these factors will help you define the starting point and the goal you desire to reach.

STEP 4: Make a Blueprint!

Once this is accomplished you need to prepare a blueprint. In preparation for constructing this blueprint, your church leaders need to look at the analysis they have completed of your church and compare it against their newly-stated goals. Their blueprint should include the steps necessary to move your church from where it is to where it needs to go. Once this is completed, you need to follow your plan.

What should your blueprint include? It will be helpful when designing your blueprint to consider questions asked in Chapter 3, as well as evaluate:

- What needs to change
- What should stay the same
- What is the quality of your pulpit ministry
- What is the quality of your church's teaching ministry (Bible studies, discipleship program, small groups, Sunday school, youth ministry, etc.)
- What needs to change in your church's teaching ministry
- What is the quality of each of the church's ministries
- Are your church leaders qualified for their positions

- Are those who teach in your church qualified for these positions
- Are there ministries your church is not doing which it should be doing
- Are there ministries that your church should discontinue
- Are your church's ministries producing results:
 - Are people coming to Christ
 - Are people being ministered to and their needs met
 - Are people growing in their faith toward maturity

STEP 5: Execute it!

After making your evaluation and drawing up a blueprint, your leaders need to present it to the church members. When doing this, use your pulpit to share your biblical blueprint and the direction where the church is headed. Have special meetings where the details can be discussed. Get the church excited about what God is doing and will do in your church. Then begin to implement the plan step-by-step. Bring the people along with you. Don't force change upon them. Having said that, you may have some people in your church who will not be willing to change (cf., Luke 5:39). Though you should try to help them along in this transition, in the end they may simply just have to live with the results of the unwanted change; yet that is their choice if they decide to resist. Please remember that God has placed you as a leader of the church. Without your direction and guidance, your church will not grow and move forward. Therefore humbly lead your church toward the goal. Proverbs 11:14 says: "Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory."

WARNING: Expect Satan To Attack!

A good reminder is found in 1 Peter 5:8-9:

"Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world."

Satanic attack should be expected, that is, if you are making a difference for Christ. His attack will come in many different forms. The greatest way in which Satan will attack is usually within the church. He may stir up church members so that there will be discord, obstacles, discouragement, etc. This is why it is important to bring the congregation alongside of you through this process step-by-step so that they feel a part of it and not alienated by it. This is why your church ought to fast and pray to seek God through the church's self-evaluation process, its renewal, and its implementation of its blueprint to reach its community for Christ. Satan will have a difficult time dividing a church which is united.

Another challenge in the spiritual battle is to ensure that the church's leaders and members have their spiritual armor in place. About this topic Paul said in Ephesians 6:

¹⁰ "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. ¹⁷And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (vss. 10-17)

As was briefly discussed in Chapter 6, the spiritual armor of God has to do with a believer's maturity. When a believer is abiding in Christ, his spiritual armor is in place. When he is not abiding, his spiritual armor is insufficient. Therefore, the more mature a believer is, the more he will be abiding and his armor in place (cf., 1 Cor. 3:1-3; Heb. 5:11-14). This is why it is so important for the local church to be an equipping center where its members

are maturing in Christ. As they grow in maturity, they will be abiding more often in Christ thus being able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil because their spiritual armor will be in place. Consequently you need to spiritually prepare the members of your church for the spiritual battle ahead. This is your responsibility. This will also be helpful as the church faces change and the daily struggles of life. Therefore, “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28).

Take the Next Step

The next step is up to you and your church’s leadership. What are you going to do with this information? Yes, this can seem overwhelming; but God is not asking you to apply it all in one day, in one week, or even in one month. Set up a plan and then follow it. Determine what you are realistically capable of doing and then do that. Even if the steps are small, that is okay. What is not okay is complacency and no progress at all. May God bless you as you move toward the goal!

APPENDIX

Appendix 1.

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 wield 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!”

Appendix 2.

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 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, and 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.

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."

Appendix 3.

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 Thessalonians 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. 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)."

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.

Where is your church located -- in a large city, a village, a suburb, or in a sparsely populated area? Does your setting create a challenge to reach the lost for Christ? Is your church facing a bad economy, persecution, or is it simply not growing and you just do not know what step you should take? Then this book, "Evangelism: How to Mobilize Your Church" may have the solution to your dilemma.

This book discusses issues such as the importance of the Word of God in relationship to evangelism, the gather/scatter principle, developing blueprints for renewal and evangelism, understanding the times and knowing what to do, contemporary and church cultures, what it means to become all things to all men and much more.

The author and his wife are available to lead training seminars for church leaders and their wives. As a former pastor, Randy is able to provide training throughout the countries of Eurasia on how to mobilize your church to do evangelism and how to build a dynamic church. As a former pastor's wife, Annette can provide training for leaders' wives on various topics of interest to them.



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