

Becoming an Enthusiastic Church

Practical Steps to Effective Ministries

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Introduction

Have you ever read a medical book that describes human diseases? If you're prone to hypochondria, I don't recommend it! Hundreds of things can go wrong with both the human body and the church. When your body isn't working properly, you don't feel right. When your church isn't working properly, most members aren't enthusiastic about it because it isn't very relevant to their everyday lives. The enthusiasm level of lay leaders in Eastern Regional Conference churches that took Natural Church Development surveys predicted the level of church health more accurately than any other single factor. Church health and enthusiasm are joined at the hip. Healthy, enthusiastic churches meet the needs of those both inside and outside their walls. Most of this book is dedicated to helping you improve your church's health and, with it, your enthusiasm.

I designed this book to help you examine your church systems one by one, identify problem areas, and make necessary changes in a way most members will accept. You'll also improve the way your church systems support each other. You won't be able to apply every suggestion in this book. Choose those most applicable to your situation. The goal is to be a healthy, enthusiastic, reproducing church.

Churches that are committed to growing healthier and more enthusiastic should enter and work through the Natural Church Development (NCD) process. Contact your regional or national denominational office to inquire about help with the NCD process. If you have no such office, or your denomination has no NCD coaches, contact ChurchSmart Resources, 3830 Ohio Avenue, St. Charles, IL 60174, 1-800-253-4276 for assistance. ChurchSmart is the source in the United States for all NCD materials. This book will be most helpful to NCD churches. It will also aid non-NCD churches, but churches who haven't taken an NCD survey won't understand their strengths and weaknesses nearly as well as those who have.

We'll focus on maximizing eight key dimensions of life within healthy churches. Christian A. Schwarz, the developer of NCD, identified these key dimensions during a study of 1,000 churches in thirty-two countries. He named them quality characteristics and described them in *Natural Church Development*. I believe these are eight dimensions of loving God, neighbors, and fellow-believers.

The eight dimensions include small groups, leadership, relationships, spirituality, worship service, evangelism, ministry, and structures. Weakness or strength in any dimension influences all other dimensions. Think of yourself as the manager of an eight-person baseball team. You build a winning team by helping each player master the game's fundamentals and by promoting cooperation and teamwork among them. We'll seek to maximize the health of each of the eight and the cooperation among them.

Chapter 1

Healthy Small Groups

Worship

Begin your meeting by leading group members into God's presence. "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name" (Psalm 100:4). The worship leader leads best by worshipping God herself. Use tapes, CDs, instruments, group singing, thanksgiving for specific ways God's grace has been experienced, or praising God using the names by which he has made himself known in Scripture.

If you have a worship team, your worship leader can train the small group leaders how to lead worship effectively. Vary the content of the worship portion of your meeting.

Begin your small group meeting with a worship segment. If you already do, get feedback from your members and seek to improve it.

Grow in Christ

Be the Steering Wheel

The "Jesus Factor" makes a small group Christian —"For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20). Small groups in Alcoholics Anonymous help people, but a vague "Higher Power" can't free people from sin like the resurrected Jesus can. "To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free... so if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed'" (John 8:31-32, 36).

Small groups in the church are healthy only if Jesus is steering each member of the group. The hang-up isn't so much a lack of knowledge as a lack of submission. Human nature rebels against being controlled, even by Jesus. It wants to drive. Growing in Christ requires letting Jesus drive. Having the whole Bible memorized without a willingness to let Jesus direct you won't profit you. Be the steering wheel.

Healthy small groups meet the varied needs of each person when the Spirit of Jesus within directs and empowers each member. Do you know how to comfort a group member who's experiencing sorrow? Jesus knows. Do you know how to worship the Father in spirit and truth? Jesus does. How can the Bible teaching portion of group motivate members to hold to Jesus' teaching? Jesus knows. How can you contribute to the group in a way that will build it up? Jesus knows that too. If you become the steering wheel, Jesus will drive.

Abiding in Christ is the spiritual anchor that holds the small group securely against the forces that would make it irrelevant (John 15:5). Jesus is the rock you can't see on the bottom of the river of life, and your faith is the biting edge of the anchor that grips him. Your small group is securely anchored to the extent your members entrust Jesus with the steering wheel of life.

Repeatedly emphasize in your small group the value of submitting to Jesus' control.

Eat Home-Cooked Meals

Children and Christians must eat to grow. Seeing pictures of food, listening to bacon sizzle in a pan, or sniffing apple pie baking in the oven won't help you grow. You have to eat. Similarly, hearing Bible lessons taught or stories about what God is teaching others in their daily devotions is no substitute for God's working in and through your life. Spiritual maturity is home-cooked. You have to spend time in the Bible daily and apply it to your life. No one can do it for you. God wants to do a unique work in each believer. Every member of a small group must learn to feed himself/herself from God's word, to pray, and to obey. Spiritual maturity is home-cooked.

Spend part of your small group time sharing with an accountability partner what God has taught you in his word during last week's devotions.

Fire up!

Passionate, joy-filled small group leaders in time produce passionate, joy-filled small group members. If your small group leaders don't have spiritual passion, your small group members won't either. Developing spiritual passion takes effort. Here are some suggestions to whip up something special in your spiritual kitchen:

1. Read *Desiring God* by John Piper, published by Multnomah Publishers, Inc., most recently in 2003.
2. Renew your spiritual, physical, and emotional strength by taking one day a week to focus on God and activities that renew you.
3. Use your time, talents, and finances to serve Christ. Someday you'll have to give an account of how you used these gifts from God. Moreover, in the present, God dumps joy into your life with the same size measuring spoon you use to give your resources away. "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6:38). Use a big spoon!
4. Eat properly, get sufficient rest, and exercise regularly. Emotional health, spiritual health, and physical health are interdependent.
5. When you pray, don't do all the talking. Be quiet and listen for God's still, small voice. Obeying his prompting brings joy. "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (Psalm 46:10).
6. Pass on what God has taught you by mentoring someone. "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Timothy 2:2). You experience Jesus' joy when you give to others. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth" (3 John 4). See Chapter 2 for details.

7. God designed you to experience joy when you use your natural and spiritual gifts to benefit others. Use them to minister to those in your group.
8. Yield to the Holy Spirit of Jesus every morning when you awake. Release control back as many times through the day as you snatch it away through sin. You're the steering wheel, not the driver.
9. Don't put your faith on the shelf at home. Your relationship with your spouse, family, or closest friends is the testing ground and cutting edge of your faith.
10. Attend or schedule a prayer retreat that will challenge you spiritually.
11. Forgive everyone who's offended you. You can't have joy and a passion for God and cling to bitterness and grudges. Light and darkness can't coexist.
12. Give an accountability partner permission to ask you specific questions you select about your devotional life, your spiritual passion, and sins with which you wrestle.

Share in your small group your strategy to stoke the flames of your personal spiritual passion, with leaders going first.

Saturate with Prayer

The health of your small group depends on prayer like a fish depends on clean water. Leader, pray for your group members every day; group members, pray for your leader and apprentice leader daily. Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Pray for one another's needs and for lost persons by name every meeting and during your devotional life between meetings. Pray for God's wisdom to know how the group can reach out to the lost and for him to prepare their hearts for this outreach. Use sentence prayers in group meetings to encourage members who find it difficult to pray aloud. Prayer's primary motivation is to become more like Jesus.

The acrostic PRAYER will help you develop a balanced prayer life. It represents: Praise, Rely, Admit, Yield, Express thanks, and Request.

Praise: Honor and exalt God for who he is and what he's done. Rely: Depend upon Jesus, his word, and his finished work on the cross, no matter what. Admit: Acknowledge the sins of which you're guilty. Express thanks: Express gratitude to God for what he's done. Request: Ask God to supply what you need (petition) and what others need (intercession).

Develop a plan to generate self-sustaining prayer power in your small group.

Treat Sin Like a Splinter

You remove a splinter from your thumb because it hinders your ability to function. Confessing your sin removes a splinter from your spiritual life that pains both you and God.

Confession is agreeing with God that you've committed a sin, naming it specifically, and expressing the desire, with his help, never to repeat it.

Ask God to reveal if you're guilty of spiritual apathy, gossip, mistrust, unwillingness to forgive, loss of first love, impure thoughts, hesitancy, prayerlessness, worry, lust, lack of self-control, competition, pride, power struggles, unkind words, or fear. Confess the sins he reveals, and claim the forgiveness he offers in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Confess your "splinters" of sin in your small group prayer time, with leaders going first.

Focus on God's Word

Make part of your small group meeting a study and application of God's word. Use at least 50% of this time to apply God's word to the nuts and bolts of everyday life. Choose resources that will help group members grow in their faith and equip them to help others grow in theirs. Use material such as the *Running to Win Series*, described in the Introduction, that group members can teach to others the same way it was taught to them.

Make your teaching time Bible-centered, at least 50% application-focused and reproducible.

Meet for a Reason

Socializing is fun, but it isn't a sufficient reason to meet regularly as a Christian small group. An inwardly focused small group without a mission and specific goals is like a team that practices but never has any games! To understand how to develop core values, mission, vision, and goals, see Chapter 2.

The purpose of a Christian small group is to make more and better disciples, to love God completely, your neighbor as yourself and other believers as Jesus loves you. The small group meets the needs of its members and, through them, the needs of others who aren't part of the group, both Christian and not-yet-Christian. Regularly evaluate your progress toward your goals, and make necessary adjustments to become more effective.

Unhealthy groups value fellowship, and perhaps, Bible teaching. Members don't know one another as well as they think they do. They don't know what causes each other pain. They don't share with one another about areas in which they're struggling. They wear an "I've got it all together" mask. Relationships are shallow. Bible teaching is application-poor. The leader (teacher) is the doer and the members are spectators. There's no apprentice leader. Most members aren't very excited or enthusiastic about their relationship with God. There's no evangelistic outreach. Most members have no defined role in the group based on their spiritual passion, natural and spiritual gifts, and personality. They might give money to various causes, but they rarely work together as a team to serve others. The group is essentially closed to outsiders, yet the members don't think so. It has no written core values, mission, vision, or goals. Group members meet more out of habit than purpose.

Healthy small groups agree on their core values, are mission-driven, and have a vision of what God wants to do before he does it. They meet a broad range of their members' needs, empower them to be all God created them to be, develop them as leaders, help them to love each other, stir up their spiritual passion, inspire them through worship, send them out to meet the needs of those who aren't yet believers, use their gifts to minister to one another, and get maximum fruit from the ministry resources they spend.

Define your small group's mission and the specific goals you're pursuing to accomplish it. Frequently review these and evaluate progress during group meetings at least every three months.

Care for Each Other

Get Real

The small group must be a safe place for each member to share struggles. Confidentiality is essential. What's said in the group stays in the group. To keep all members on the same page concerning confidentiality and other group values, ask each to sign a small group covenant (See Appendix B).

The leader sets the pace by getting real first and to the greatest extent. If the leader expects each member to share at a 7 level on a 1-10 scale of openness, the leader must share at least at an 8 level. When leaders are real, group members are most likely to share where they're hurting with less fear of betrayal or rejection. If the leader confesses problems, members have permission to have problems too.

Present the small group covenant and its benefits to your group and challenge them to sign it.

Get Open

In a healthy small group, individuals are accepted and loved for who they are. Picture the leader with wide-open arms representing Jesus who said, "Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). That kind of accepting atmosphere attracts and holds newcomers.

Newcomers in the worship service are an excellent source of new persons for your small group. Your church should use a tracking system that monitors the attendance of people in worship services to identify and follow-up guests. Small group members can visit these guests and invite them to come to a small group social event. There they can meet and get to know the members of the group. After the social event, invite them to come to a regular group meeting.

Small groups, like glue, hold newcomers in local churches. When they visit your small group, make sure they're introduced and told they can be as involved or uninvolved as they want while they're checking out the group. They don't have to say or do anything unless they want to. Show them a copy of the small group covenant to communicate what the group values.

Develop a strategy to bring new people into your group and make them feel welcome. Frequently evaluate your effectiveness and make necessary adjustments to your strategy.

Get Close

In unhealthy small groups, members see one another only in group meetings and other church-sponsored events. Outside these activities, they live almost totally independently of one another. That might be the American way, but it isn't the Christian way.

All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:44-47)

Relationships are developed by doing things together. A team must be built. Unity doesn't happen automatically just because you're all in the same small group. Eat together. Work together. Play together. Pray together. Worship together. Study together. Connect with other group members in these ways at least once each month. Celebrate one another's successes. Serve each other. When someone in the group has a need, the others rally around. Speak the truth to one another, but say it with love. "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses" (Proverbs 27:6).

Use shared activities outside group meetings to strengthen relationships among group members.

Get Busy

Assign a role in the small group to each member based on spiritual gifts, spiritual passion, temperament, and natural abilities. In addition to the small group leader, other ways to serve could include apprentice leader, song leader, worship leader, host/hostess, prayer leader, discussion leader, activities leader, outreach director, ministry matchmaker, ministry project leader, etc. No spectators are allowed.

The small group helps members put their faith to work. First, they discover how God made them and then a ministry that fits them. As others coach or mentor them in their area of giftedness and they become even more skilled, they experience a sense of fulfillment they've never known before. The God of the universe is using them. May they never get over the thrill!

Finding one's ministry is at times trial and error. Give group members freedom to fail in their ministry. If at first you don't succeed...you're just about average! Failure isn't final. Those afraid to fail are afraid to experiment. Fear of failure is worse than failure. Failure is stumbling. Fear of failure is paralysis.

Soak group members with oceans of encouragement. Look for what they're doing right and commend them for it. Applaud them for trying, and clearly communicate an expectation that every group member should have a ministry that brings joy and fulfillment.

Train small group leaders or someone in each small group how to match persons with the right ministry. Check Chapter 7 for a tool that could be helpful.

Develop a role for each person in your small group consistent with spiritual gifts, passion, temperament, and life experience.

Get Relevant

Everything your small group does must be relevant to each member and to those to whom you're ministering. When you're scratching where your group members itch, you don't have to worry about them dropping out. When you're relevant to those to whom you're ministering, you're building bridges of love that will lead many to Christ and some into your group. When your group helps people in and outside it experience life to the fullest extent (John 10:10), where could they go to get something better?

Every three months ask small group members to circle the best answer to the following statement:

The activities of my small group are relevant to my life and meet my needs:

- a. to a very great extent (0)*
- b. to a great extent (1)*
- c. average (2)*
- d. hardly (3)*
- e. not at all (4)*

Identify specific problem areas and make necessary adjustments so that the average answer is at least "to a great extent" (1.0 or lower).

Develop Leaders

The health and size of your small group ministry and church depend on the quality and quantity of your leaders. Don't wait for more leaders to appear. "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:38), and then put legs on your prayers and develop them.

Apprenticeship is an excellent way to develop leaders. Choose a teachable apprentice based on character, gifts, faithfulness, availability, humility, and obedience. Don't expect the maturity of a seasoned leader.

Make spending time together a priority. That's how Jesus trained his disciples. You could meet with an apprentice an hour a week after the small group meeting. Pray with him/her, discuss and evaluate the small group meeting, plan for future meetings, and assign responsibilities. Train with a reproducible, "show how" process. First, you demonstrate a skill and let another observe. Second, the apprentice helps you. Third, the apprentice does the task and

you help. Fourth, you watch the apprentice do the task and provide a critique. Fifth, the apprentice graduates, and another apprentice observes him/her do the task.

You're also developing leaders by placing all small group members in some kind of ministry. Some of them will become the apprentice small group leaders of the future.

Leadership training classes help followers become emerging leaders and emerging leaders become mature. You become a healthier church by developing more and better leaders. One practical structure to accomplish this is regular leadership training classes and retreats that emphasize vision-casting, character, knowledge, and specific skills development. Small group leaders and apprentices should attend along with other church leaders. A helpful source about leadership is *Learning to Lead*. See the Introduction for details. Vision-casting keeps the church's vision before its leaders and reminds them how each ministry plays an important part in achieving it. Use testimonies to highlight how ministries are helping to achieve the vision.

Small group leaders should pray about, select, and develop an apprentice leader.

In cooperation with the pastor and elected leaders, participate in leadership training classes that meet at least every other month.

Serve Others

Most people who don't attend church in your community think church people don't care about them. Many churches can do a much better job of translating their caring into action. Develop specific plans to make a difference in your community, or you'll become "steeple people" whose actions are mysteriously hidden beneath a steeple and behind stained glass, brick, and mortar. Outsiders have no idea what happens behind your walls. Inward-focused churches don't benefit the community and are viewed as irrelevant, secret organizations.

Follow in Christ's steps (1 Peter 2:21), whether that means suffering or fruitful service, "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). List the people you're serving. List those your small group is serving.

The next members of your small group are probably the friends, relatives, or neighbors of present members. Who among them seems most receptive to Christ and his church? Perhaps they've visited your church or even your group. Which of their needs can your group meet? As a group, tap the natural and spiritual gifts of your members and show them Christ's love by meeting their needs.

Develop and implement plans together as a small group to serve others in your community.

Lead Others to Christ

Serving others is one of the best ways to lead them to Christ. All around the world, the most effective evangelism occurs when Christians meet the needs of non-Christians. Everyone

wants to be loved. Having needs met is a love-language everyone understands. A friend in need can become a friend in need!

Think of your small group as an evangelistic team. Everyone can contribute to the evangelistic task of stair-stepping others to Christ. Those with the gift of evangelism excel at sharing the gospel and leading others to receive Christ. About 10% of believers have this gift. They need to be free from other small group responsibilities to use that gift. Those with a servant style enjoy demonstrating Christ's love by meeting others' needs. Some excel at inviting others to a worship service, small group meeting, or social activity. Some influence best by telling how Christ has made a difference in their own life. Some excel at answering difficult questions others have about the Christian faith. Think of yourselves as a team.

Keep one another accountable to take risks, and use your evangelistic styles to reach out to others. At every small group meeting, talk about how your outreach is going and pray for those to whom you're reaching out.

Multiply the Group

A major task of the small group leader is to develop other leaders and multiply the group. The biggest barrier to multiplication is overcoming an almost universal unwillingness of group members to break up a good thing. When a group is functioning well and meeting the needs of its members, it's a sacrifice to give it up as some members go into another group. The new group has a different feel than the old group because different persons compose it.

The best way to overcome this barrier is to emphasize at the first meeting and regularly thereafter that the group's goal is to reproduce. That way, more and more persons can come to know Jesus and experience the joy and fulfillment of small group life. To create a sense of urgency, set a date to multiply that's no more than eighteen months after the group's first meeting. Plan a celebration party for the group's last meeting.

One way to multiply is for the leader to take half the people in the group and the apprentice to take the other half. It's best not to assign people to a group. Let them choose. The apprentice can make caring phone contacts with those the leader anticipates will be led by the apprentice after the group multiplies. Both the leader and the apprentice of the first group will select an apprentice and grow their groups until they're large enough to multiply again. Prepare for multiplication by forming two groups for discussion, sharing, and prayer after a joint worship time. Do this for a month or two before multiplication. The leader takes one group and the apprentice the other.

Another way to multiply is for the mother group to send out its apprentice and another member of the mother group who will become the new apprentice. A third way is to send out the leader of the mother group with a new apprentice to develop a whole new group. The apprentice of the mother group becomes its leader and a new apprentice is selected from the original group.

Set a date to multiply your group within the next twelve to eighteen months, and develop necessary plans and leadership to do so.

Carefully Consider Your Small Group's Decisions and Actions

Your small group's decisions and actions affect your whole church. Success in multiplying your group encourages other groups and the church as a whole. Newcomers to the worship service your group recruits can't be in another group. As they find a home in your group, many will decide to join your church. The leaders your group develops will bless the whole church. The resources you use reduce what's available for other ministries. The new believers your group introduces to the life of the church have the potential to bless it in many ways. The development of your members in worship in your small group equips them to worship more fully in the worship services. Your prayers for your own ministry and for other ministries increase their effectiveness. Your mobilization of your small group members in ministry and outreach increases your church's influence for Christ in your community. That's only the tip of the iceberg of your influence.

Consider how your group's proposed plans will affect all the other ministries in the church. Make adjustments to promote long-term positive benefits to other ministries.

Harness All Energy to Build the Kingdom

Not everyone in a small group is giving his all for the kingdom. Some already have the pedal to the metal in high gear. Some have the accelerator floored—in reverse! Some are just idling in park. The challenge is to motivate and unite these diverse individuals into a winning team.

Those already racing in high gear and those who are hurtling around the track in the wrong direction often have the most leadership potential. Harness the energy of those who are already supportive of and committed to the group's mission and goals. Make sure their ministry responsibility fits their spiritual passion and gifts. They're willing to do anything and everything to help. Beware of wearing them out in ministry that "somebody has to do." Channel their energy into what they do best.

Those speeding around the track the wrong way resist the group's mission and goals. The leader should meet with these persons individually to discover why they're resisting. Perhaps they don't realize how they're coming across to others in the group. Communicate the desire to work together as a team and converse with the individual concerning her part on the team. Perhaps a different role on the team will bring a different attitude. The goal is to turn all negative energy in a positive direction that'll help the small group achieve its vision, mission, and goals.

Group members who are idling in park need to be convinced that the vision, mission, and goals of the group are worthy of their best effort. Perhaps they're too busy to make a contribution because of wrong priorities. The leader should frequently remind the group where they're headed and why that's significant. Match idle persons with a ministry within the group through which their life can make a difference.

Mobilize the energy of your small group members to accomplish your mission and goals.

Use Your God-Given Resources Efficiently

Seek to produce the greatest amount of fruit from your resources and to foster self-sustaining small group ministry. Finance your own ministry, and use the natural and spiritual gifts of group members. Each member should be matched with a ministry that provides fulfillment and fruitfulness.

Develop your own leadership to sustain and expand small group ministry by appointing an apprentice leader from the beginning of the group's life. Group meeting time doubles as training time for the apprentice. The leader might also meet with the apprentice after the group meeting to evaluate the meeting and give assignments to the apprentice. Begin and end meetings on time. Don't waste the time of group members.

Train all your leaders and apprentices together at regularly scheduled meetings. Share curriculum, meeting places, equipment, and worship resources among small groups.

Conduct small group ministry in a way that will make it healthy, self-sustaining, and continually expanding beyond the lifetime of present members.

Work Together with Other Small Groups

Working with other small groups on ministry or outreach projects can accomplish more than the small groups could achieve separately. Most projects require skilled persons and helpers. Groups working together increase the number of skilled persons and the number and variety of tasks that can be successfully completed. Small groups that meet in the same facility at the same time could benefit by combining for the worship portion of the meeting. Use your creativity to generate other ways groups could work together for mutual benefit.

Cooperate in ministry with at least one other small group in ways that benefit you both.

Evaluate the Effectiveness of Your Small Group

To evaluate the health of your small group, complete the Healthy Small Groups Underlying Issues Inventory in Appendix A.

Chapter 2

Healthy Leadership

Show How

Leaders must model integrity and skill. “And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them” (Psalm 78:72). Leaders equip others to serve by their own example. A leadership picture is worth ten thousand leadership words. Paul told Timothy, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). Paul held up his own life as worthy of imitation, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Leaders most powerfully direct others in the way they should go by walking there themselves.

Lead in speech, life, love, faith, and purity.

Use Your Strengths

Leaders influence best in their areas of strength. No leader is a good fit for every ministry in the church. The liver or lung can’t do it all; neither can substitute for the heart or pancreas. Each leader’s ministry should fit his/her temperament, spiritual passion, spiritual gifts, and experience, so at least 75% of ministry is done in areas of strength. The leader’s role isn’t to be strong in all places, but to recruit and place persons in ministry so the church is strong in all places. Strengths are revealed by ministries that are fulfilling, fruitful, and filled with positive feedback from those who benefit from them. All who minister in the church should spend at least 75% of ministry in areas of strength. This principle also applies to the pastor.

No pastor is a good fit for every church in America. Neither Rick Warren nor Bill Hybels would be a well-known name if they’d been pastor of a Haitian church in Brooklyn, a Korean church in San Francisco, or a rural church in North Dakota. They’ve excelled because they perfectly fit the congregations they’re leading. They fit because they started the churches they pastor. Those who like their leadership join their churches, and those who don’t, look elsewhere. It isn’t that simple for a pastor moving into an established church with its own personality and history. The first principle of healthy leadership is that the pastor must fit the congregation.

A good match between the pastor and the congregation is sometimes complicated by impatience and anxiety on the part of pastors’ seeking placement in a first church or after being without appointment for a time. The pastor can be so desperate for employment that any church will do. Unfortunately, it won’t. A mismatch with a congregation produces pain for both pastor and people.

Congregations who’ve been without a pastor for a season sometimes think any pastor would be better than no pastor. Not so. It’s best to wait for a pastor who fits the congregation. A church was without a pastor for months. A lay leader asked me whether I thought the church

should hire a person they'd interviewed recently or wait for another person who'd not be available for several more months. I asked myself, *Who would be the best fit for the long-term health of the church?* I advised the leader to wait. The leader took my advice. The church has prospered under that pastor's ministry.

Sometimes neither pastors nor church leaders are totally honest about their expectations. The marriage of pastor and congregation is like that between husbands and wives. Only after saying "I do" do they learn they didn't know the one they married as well as they thought! Romantic and church courtships feature "best foot forward" behavior. The pastor's "trial sermon" at one church I attended was by far the best I heard him preach the two years I attended there! It was best foot forward behavior. He was a good pastor, but not a particularly good preacher. His "trial sermon" promised far more than he could consistently deliver. Honesty and clearly expressed expectations by both congregational leaders and pastoral candidates are essential for a good "marriage."

Do the pastor's gifts and priorities fit the congregation's needs and priorities? Can the pastor use his/her gifts at least 75% of the time with relatively little time spent in ungifted ministry? Pulpit giants are often pastoral midgets and vice-versa. It's difficult to be a great preacher and a great pastor. If the pastor of a rural church is weak in visitation, usually no number of sparkling three-point sermons will make up for it. Church leaders should know what the congregation wants and needs and clearly express it during the pastoral search process.

If your church already has a pastor, you can increase his/her effectiveness by being prayerful and flexible. A guaranteed way to get a better pastor is to pray for the one you have! Take advantage of your pastor's strengths. Make his/her ministry job description at least 75% gift-oriented. Assign tasks for which the pastor isn't gifted to other staff or lay workers who are. This approach requires flexibility because it breaks the traditional mold of what the church expects the pastor to do—everything! It frees the pastor to bear maximum fruit and, at the same time, harnesses the energy and gifts of others in the congregation. The church will be far healthier for this break from tradition.

Help each person on your leadership team to understand and use his/her strengths in ministry. Work through "Finding Significance in the Church" (717-652-0255 or barb@erccog.org). The cost is \$3.00 each plus shipping. See www.erccog.org under downloads/Discipleship/Spiritual Gifts.

Understand Yourself and Others

Leaders who understand their own temperament and how to relate to others with a different one will be able to minister effectively to a wide variety of people.

Evaluate your temperament using instruments such as the DiSC, Myers-Briggs, or "My Unique Design" in "Preparing to Be the Church." To get copies check www.erccog.org under downloads/church membership/church membership classes, pp. 51ff.

Find a Ministry You're Passionate About

The most effective workers in any church are passionate about their ministry. If you're not passionate about your ministry, you're probably in the wrong one! Spiritual passion is a key guide to the ministry to which God is calling you. For over 1900 years, spiritual gift inventories didn't exist. The key has always been need and passion. Your ministry is where your passion to serve meets the needs of the church and world. The key question is, "What do you want to do for Jesus?" What makes your heart's spiritual wind chimes sing? What drives, excites, and fulfills you? If you're in the right ministry, you should be experiencing rich fulfillment and joy through it.

Your spiritual passion is like a left-turn arrow on a traffic light, pointing toward your ministry. "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:12-13). God is working in you to give you the desire and ability to accomplish his will. He gives spiritual passion. Paul's passion was to present every man perfect in Christ (Colossians 1:28). He wrote, "To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me" (Colossians 1:29).

Some persons prefer to work with people, some with things, and others with information. A friend, who attended seminary with me, excelled in Hebrew and Greek. He spent a year as a pastoral intern in Idaho. In the process, he discovered his passion was not pastoral ministry. He prefers to work with information. In 1982, he joined Wycliffe. Since then he's translated the entire New Testament and some of the Old Testament into Quechua, the language of those native to the Andes in Peru. He relates with people, but primarily works with information. He's touching thousands for Christ in a ministry in which his desires and abilities and the world's needs meet. What do you want to do more than anything for Jesus Christ that'll help make more and better disciples?

One practical way to discover your passion is to explore a description of the ministries your church offers. If no such list exists, developing one should be a priority. The following list of ministries was adapted from "New Providence Church of God Ministry Opportunities."

First, circle all ministries that appeal to you, even though your church might not yet have these ministries. Second, review the ministries you marked, and check the four ministries of greatest interest. Those are the first ministries you should try. Begin with the one that seems most attractive.

Ministries

Christian Education: nursery attendant, preschool teacher, elementary teacher, middle school teacher, high school teacher, young adult teacher, adult teacher, teacher training instructor, discipleship training, discipleship training coordinator, mentoring ministry, teach home Bible studies for believers, department director, Christian education director, Vacation Bible School teacher, Vacation Bible School helper, Vacation Bible School director, Pioneer Club worker (youth work), Pioneer Club leader, camp ministry, library/resource, help place others in ministry,

children's Christmas/Easter program director, children's Christmas/Easter program worker, develop leaders in the church.

Worship: song leader, choir leader (adult), choir leader (children), choir member, instrumentalist (orchestra, band, piano, organ, keyboard), vocalist (worship team, soloist), worship leader, songwriter, drama (director, player, scriptwriter, costumes), public Scripture reading, public prayer, speaking/preaching, usher, worship intercessor (praying during service outside the sanctuary), junior church director, junior church worker, parking lot greeter, inside greeter, answer newcomers' questions.

Communications/Media: artist, photographer, printing, audiovisual technician, sound technician, calligraphy, preparing teaching aids, desktop publishing, reporter to newspaper, send bulletins to absentees, phone absentees, mail cards.

Building/Grounds: custodial services, lawn care, color plantings, painting, carpentry, plumbing, electrical, mechanical, carpet cleaning, roofing, locks/security, snow removal, trim shrubbery, weed.

Outreach: visitation (hospital, prospective members, nursing home, prison, homebound, grieving), feed the hungry, evangelism (individual, group), evangelistic home Bible study (host, leader), counseling (spiritual, psychological, grief, substance abuse, financial, premarital, marriage), college campus ministry, benevolent ministry, missions to singles, servant evangelism project coordinator, servant evangelism participant, evangelism training coordinator, evangelism trainer, evangelistic event coordinator, social visits to church visitors, evangelistic visits to church visitors, coordinate sports ministry outreach, organize seeker Sunday school classes/small groups, coordinate "defending the faith" ministry, help others communicate their personal testimony effectively, Alpha course coordinator, Alpha course leader, Alpha course host, lead recovery group, youth outreach leader, youth outreach worker, entertain unbelievers, show evangelistic videos.

Social and Hospitality: social program planner, banquet coordinator, food preparation, cleanup after church dinners, light refreshment service, decorating, host for guest speakers, lodging for missionaries, retreat planning, serve at hospitality table, sports event planner, provide transportation, coordinate funeral dinners.

Youth Ministry: lead discussions, direct projects, direct recreation, Bible-quiz coach.

Intercession: pray for the lost by name, pray for church leaders by name, pray for church members by name, pray for new believers by name, pray for missionaries by name.

Other:

Delegate Generously

Don't Do Everything Yourself

Church leaders' primary responsibility is to lead. That seems obvious, but it's often precisely what they don't do! They frequently busy themselves managing the day to day operations of the boat of the church (choosing the color of the rug in the fellowship hall, installing a new roof, ordering materials for small groups, etc.) while the boat drifts aimlessly at sea. Their primary role is to seek God's will for the church's mission, to cast a vision for what the church will look like when it arrives at that destination and to motivate all on board to work as a team to get there. Leaders develop the plan, and others manage its details.

Many church leaders have tasks they should delegate to those gifted and motivated to do them. Delegating gives others the joy and fulfillment of being used by God and frees up leaders to do more of what they do best. In two of the three churches I served, I was my own secretary. I typed the bulletins and other things as well. That was not very smart. I did these tasks because the pastor always had. I thought it was what they paid me to do. Others in the church could've taken care of these administrative tasks but didn't because I didn't delegate them. I'd have had more time to lead the church if I'd not spent so much time managing it. I didn't understand the benefits of using delegation to develop others in ministry.

Let Go of Some of Your Ministry

Why don't we delegate more ministry responsibilities to others? Much of it is motivated by pride. Either we think we do it better than anyone else, or we're afraid someone else might do it better than we do. Perhaps part of our self-esteem is built on positive feedback we've received from doing it. Maybe we're afraid someone might not follow through and complete the task we assign and then we'll look bad. Possibly, we don't allow enough time to teach someone else how to do the task before the deadline for completion. It could be we're too independent of others. Maybe we just don't know how to delegate.

Delegation is more than passing off your work to someone else. Delegating liberates you to do what God has called you to do, invites others into ministry and allows them to discover what God is calling them to do. It's a valuable tool to develop people in your church to their full potential, to give their lives meaning, and to increase their motivation to serve the Lord.

Delegate Wisely

Do jobs cheaper, faster, and better by delegating them to those who are more gifted to do them than you are. Adjust follow-up supervision to your workers' ability, experience, and trustworthiness. Some will need very close supervision, whereas others will need very little. Give more authority as workers demonstrate ability and faithfulness. Provide the resources needed to do the job properly. Explain how the job helps fulfill the mission, the results you want, how to do it (if needed), and deadlines for reporting on and completing it. Allow the one to whom you assign the task freedom to be creative in how to do it. Give authority along with the responsibility to do a task. Help only when the person to whom you delegate asks for it. Expect a finished task. Reward those who do the task well. Balance doing the job right with letting workers choose how to do it.

Identify at least one of your tasks or responsibilities you could delegate to involve someone else in ministry. Match the task with those who have passion and an ability to do it. Provide necessary training.

Mind God's Business

A written "To do" list reminds you to mow the lawn, pick up clothes at the cleaners, and pay your automobile insurance. Your mission statement helps channel your energy in a God-glorifying direction. Human nature tempts you to pay attention to your own needs, not to those of people outside your group. Focusing on your mission prevents you from getting all wrapped up in yourself. The church is about God, not you. Mind his business!

Define Your Mission

Your mission statement defines your business. It identifies whom you'll serve and how you'll serve them. The Red Cross' mission is "to serve the most vulnerable." God has already spelled out your purpose. "Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments'" (Matthew 22:37-39). "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18).

A good mission statement is a brief, clear, achievable, inspiring definition of why your church exists. It defines your church's business, but not how you'll do it.

The following are mission statements of churches in the Eastern Regional Conference, Churches of God:

1. To help people become fully devoted followers of Christ (Shiremanstown).
2. To lift up Jesus Christ through worship, outreach, and building a relationship with him (South Fairview).
3. To see souls saved, marriages and families healed and strengthened, and the name of Jesus glorified as we pass our faith from generation to generation till he returns (New Baltimore).
4. To invite, inspire, and encourage others to accept Christ and to disciple them towards spiritual maturity (Newport).
5. To help people say yes to God (Friendship Community).

Define your mission.

Motivate through Vision

Help Others See Where You're Going

Vision makes all the difference. A coach's vision of success, communicated compellingly to his team, taps emotional and physical energy and spurs individuals to work together to become winners. A mental picture of themselves on the gold medal platform drives Olympic athletes through years of toil, sweat, pain, and tears. A church without vision is like a car without gasoline. It isn't going anywhere.

Your vision is your mental picture of your church's healthier future state plus your plan to achieve it. It gives meaning to each ministry and motivates your people to work together enthusiastically. Imagine a tomato plant. Its roots represent the core or agreed upon values of your church that you won't compromise. The stem represents your mission, the business God has given you. The major branches represent the ministries through which you're accomplishing your mission. The smaller branches and leaves represent your goals and strategies. The tomatoes on each branch represent mission-achievement by that ministry, for example, youth becoming fully devoted followers of Christ through the influence of the youth ministry at Shiremanstown First Church of God.

Create a Vision Statement

A vision statement begins with a dream. It doesn't have to be the pastor's dream. Brainstorm as leaders what you'd like to accomplish together. Your picture of a healthier future will probably form over a period of months. Study your community and its needs. Listen to God. Write down what you hear. Of all the people you could reach, on what group will you focus? You can't reach everyone. What it takes to reach one group will repel another. For example, you can't reach twenty-year-olds and eighty-year-olds with the same ministry approach. One or two persons should put it all together and draft a vision statement based on the group's discussion. Revise it until all in the group enthusiastically own it. Allow influencers in the church to help shape it. If their fingerprints are on it, they'll own it. Give them practical ways to help make it a reality. When the vision is clear, concise, and compelling, share it and its benefits with the congregation.

Write your vision statement.

Share the Vision

Share the vision often and enthusiastically, using as many instruments as you can (newsletter, preaching, teaching, bulletin board, small groups, prayer meeting, banners, informal conversations between leaders and others in the church, etc.). Repetition is essential because vision is like water that leaks through your fingers when you try to hold it in your hands. Never assume the congregation has got it once and for all. As a bass fisherman can never have too many lures (take it by faith!), leaders can never talk too much about the church's vision.

Help each person connect his/her ministry with the vision. When your people understand how their ministry is making a difference that'll outlive them, their motivation accelerator will be flooded.

Develop and implement a strategy to communicate your vision compellingly, frequently, and extensively. Encourage key leaders to share the vision informally with others often.

Build Your Leadership Base

Recruit and train leaders to expand your church's ability to empower others for ministry. Include leadership development in your core values, mission and vision. Here's a sample mission statement that includes leadership development: "Our mission is to reproduce loving evangelists, disciples, small groups, ministers, servant-leaders, and churches." To train leaders, maintain a balance among mentoring, lecturing, and modeling to address character, knowledge, and skills, respectively.

Lecturing efficiently addresses the knowledge needs of many leaders at once. For example, a "How to Lead a Small Group" seminar could teach leaders how to deal with group members who take over during discussions.

Modeling is the best way to demonstrate ministry skills. The leader sometimes accompanies the mentor as he/she demonstrates ministry skills in his/her area of responsibility and sometimes the mentor accompanies the leader in the latter's ministry situation to observe ministry skills.

Hold a Leadership Training Class once every month. This could be a two-hour session when mentors meet with leaders or developing leaders for an hour and then leaders and developing leaders attend a knowledge/skills-building seminar together for about an hour.

Begin a monthly Leadership Training Class within the next six months. Assign someone to oversee and organize it.

Lead through Mentoring

Jesus appointed twelve men to be with him (Mark 3:14). By watching and imitating him, they learned how to apply faith and obedience to all of life. He challenged them to live for the Father and showed them how. Christian mentoring is relational nurturing to empower others to use their gifts to glorify God. Mentoring includes both ministry and life development. Use reproducible methods and materials that can be passed on from generation to generation of mentoring partners. Mentors and mentoring partners should be of the same sex.

Nothing is more important than passing your ministry on to someone else. Imagine you're standing between two mirrors. You see countless reflections in each. Those in the mirror behind you represent those who've passed their faith and ministry from one generation to the next since Jesus introduced the Great Commission. The mirror in front of you represents believers in future generations. The baton is in your hands. God hasn't called and gifted you to protect some turf in the church that gives you a feeling of significance. Nothing is more important than passing your ministry on to the next generation with the charge for them to do the same.

What Mentors Do

The material in this section is adapted from “Building Relationships” by Larry Guthrie in the July/August issue of CCCA *InSite* 2005.

Develop a mentoring plan. Find out your partner’s goals for the relationship and where he/she is now. Given your unique perspective, experience, wisdom, and skills, devise a mentoring plan to move the partner toward the desired future. The goals of your relationship might be reading a book together, developing a new skill, working through discipleship material, completing a project, memorizing verses, visiting the homebound, organizing funeral dinners, etc.

Be available. During your first mentoring appointment discuss how frequently you’ll meet and where. At the end of every appointment set up the next one. Meet at least every other week. Every couple of months, ask the partner if he/she feels the need to continue to meet.

Encourage your partner. Identify and frequently emphasize your partner’s strengths. Project tomorrow’s successes on today’s viewing screen to help your partner visualize life with mentoring goals attained.

Teach and evaluate. Once you know where the partner is and what the goal is, work together to engineer and build step-by-step a road that connects the two. This includes telling, showing, and frequent evaluation of progress made.

Be a fog light. In 1976, I became very confused about whether I should continue to raise support to join the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ or go to seminary. I called my mentor, and he advised me to continue in the direction I’d originally chosen (Crusade staff) before the fog rolled in. My confusion evaporated.

Model risk-taking. Live by faith. Set faith goals you can’t possibly achieve by your own resources. Jesus modeled faith for his disciples and expected them to catch and live by it (Matthew 8:26). Take calculated risks, and help your partner do the same.

Shine light in dark places. Help your partner focus on God and not lose heart when life gets discouraging. Identify how struggles might be disguised blessings.

Live worthy of imitation. Your mentoring partner will remember your spirit, attitudes, and actions long after forgetting your words. Perfection isn’t the goal, but who you are teaches more than what you say.

Reveal your warts. Be transparent. Teach how to succeed in the Christian life despite weaknesses, failures, and recurring sin. Sharing your failures and how you deal with them benefits your mentoring partner more than sharing your victories.

Multiply yourself by developing mentoring chains. Equip your mentoring partners to mentor others and challenge these others to mentor still others. Mentoring that includes

multiplication imitates God's plan to fill the world with living things that reproduce after their kind.

Mentoring Goals for New Believers

1. Has assurance of salvation (See *Running to Win* booklet, as described in the Introduction).
2. Has read the *Running to Win* booklet or other age-appropriate material and shared any questions with mentor.
3. Has completed the *Running to Win Series*. (This material is described in the Introduction.)
4. Prays daily, reads the Bible (beginning with Matthew), and keeps a devotional journal that includes date, Scripture read, life applications, any questions to ask the mentor, and any insights from prayer time.
5. Regularly attends and participates in a small group in the church.
6. Regularly attends and participates in the worship service.
7. Can name at least six friends in the church.
8. Has written a three- to five-minute personal testimony, memorized the basic ideas, and shared them with mentor, another Christian, and two persons who aren't believers yet.
9. Has been baptized.
10. Participates in the ordinances of the church.

Estimated length of mentoring relationship—eight months (meeting once/week)

Agenda for Mentoring New Believers

1. Pray—Pray at the beginning of the meeting asking the Lord to bless your time, when you need special wisdom or power to deal with a decision or problem, and at the end of the meeting for power to do what you've planned.
2. Listen—The new believer shares victories and defeats since the last meeting and specific problems. The mentor helps provide biblical solutions to these problems.
3. Plan—How will all ten mentoring goals be achieved within eight months? What strategies will you use? What help is needed from the mentor?
4. Review—Review practical applications of the lesson assigned the previous week from the *Running to Win Series*, memory verses, and practical applications written during daily devotions.
5. Assign—Assign the next lesson in the *Running to Win Series* after the previous lesson is mastered.
6. Minister Together—Demonstrate how to walk with Jesus while ministering to others.
7. Report—Report at least quarterly to your mentoring coordinator. Share joys, concerns, problems, questions, and needed training.

Mentoring Goals for Growing Disciples

1. Prays daily, reads the Bible, and keeps a devotional journal that includes date, Scripture read, any questions to ask the mentor, life applications, and any insights from prayer time.

2. Has read through the Old and New Testaments.
3. Has worked through discipleship curriculum such as the *Walking with God Series*; Rick Warren's *C.L.A.S.S.* 101, 201, 301 and 401 series; the Navigators' *In God's Family* (2:7 Series), etc.
4. Is a contributing member of a small group.
5. Has discovered and is using his/her spiritual gifts.
6. Demonstrates love in practical ways through a ministry that fits spiritual gifts, temperament, life experience, and passion.
7. Worships God publicly and privately.
8. Expresses passionate spirituality (fire, commitment, and enthusiasm).
9. Can use an evangelistic tool or the Bible to help a pre-Christian cross the line to faith.
10. Discovers and uses his/her evangelistic style to expand God's kingdom.
11. Has joined the local church.
12. Gives regularly and proportionately to the Lord through the local church.
13. Participates regularly in the ordinances of the church.
14. Is mentoring a new believer.

Estimated length of mentoring relationship—eighteen to twenty-four months (meeting every other week)

Agenda for Mentoring Growing Disciples

1. Pray—Pray before the meeting asking the Lord to bless your time, when you need special wisdom or power to deal with a decision or problem, and at the end of the meeting for power to do what you've planned.
2. Listen—The disciple shares victories and defeats since the last meeting and specific problems. The mentor helps provide biblical solutions to these problems.
3. Plan—What will the disciple do next to accomplish all fourteen mentoring goals within eighteen to twenty-four months? What strategies will be used? What help is needed from the mentor?
4. Review—Review practical applications of the lesson assigned the previous week from the discipleship curriculum, practical applications written during daily devotions, and the mentoring relationship with a new believer.
5. Minister Together—Do ministry together regularly.
6. Assign—Assign the next lesson in the discipleship curriculum after the previous lesson is mastered.
7. Report—Report at least quarterly to your mentoring coordinator. Share joys, concerns, problems, questions, and needed training.

Mentoring Goals for Leaders

1. Daily prays, reads the Bible, and keeps a devotional journal that includes date, Scripture read, any questions to ask the mentor, life applications, and any insights from prayer time.
2. Pursues specific physical, emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual, and ministry goals with strategies to achieve each.

3. Demonstrates love in practical ways through a ministry that fits spiritual gifts, temperament, life experience, and passion.
4. Worships God publicly and privately.
5. Expresses passionate spirituality (fire, commitment, and enthusiasm).
6. Uses personal evangelistic style to move persons toward faith in Christ.
7. Gives regularly and proportionately to the Lord through the local church.
8. Participates regularly in the ordinances of the church.
9. Has worked through *Learning to Lead* (See www.ercog.org, downloads/ leadership).
10. Introduces change in a way it's most likely to be accepted.
11. Delegates wisely.
12. If leading a small group, makes ministry holistically-, need-, application-, participation-, and obedience-oriented, rather than content- and lecture-oriented.
13. Ministry energy is channeled toward achieving specific, mission-related goals.
14. Is mentoring an apprentice.

Estimated length of mentoring relationship—eighteen to twenty-four months (meeting every other week).

Agenda for Mentoring Leaders

1. Pray—Pray before the meeting asking the Lord to bless your time, when you need special wisdom or power to deal with a decision or problem, and at the end of the meeting for power to do what you've planned.
2. Listen—A mentor helps a leader grow in character by holding him/her accountable for progress toward his/her own physical, emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual, and ministry goals. What'll be the focus between now and the next meeting in each area? The mentor spends time listening to progress and problems in each of these areas at every meeting and provides encouragement and biblical solutions.
3. Plan—What'll the leader do next to accomplish all fourteen mentoring goals within twelve to twenty-four months? What strategies will be used? What help is needed from the mentor?
4. Review—Review practical applications of the lesson assigned the previous week from *Learning to Lead*, practical applications written during daily devotions, and the mentoring relationship with a growing disciple or apprentice.
5. Assign—Assign the next lesson(s) in the leadership curriculum after the previous ones are mastered.
6. Report—Report at least quarterly to your mentoring coordinator. Share joys, concerns, problems, questions, and needed training.

Develop mentoring chains that meet the needs of new believers, growing disciples, and leaders. Appoint someone to organize and oversee mentoring in your church.

Lead through Coaching

I coach track and field throwing events each spring at Middletown Area High School. My goal isn't to make every thrower a district or state champion, but to help each athlete throw as far

as his/her ability allows. Coaching includes respecting the individuality of each athlete, demonstrating a caring attitude, teaching the fundamentals of the events, watching the athletes perform in practice and meets, celebrating whenever they break their personal distance record, building their confidence, and focusing on improving the part of their technique that's limiting them most.

Coaching in the church is similar. Some leaders are more gifted than others. Few will become a leader like Rick Warren. Coaching empowers leaders to achieve their potential. It's a practical way to develop ministry skills. How can that be done? The gist of coaching is helping others define where they are, where they want to be, and how to get there from where they are.

The coach works with and gets to know a maximum of three leaders by demonstrating a listening ear and caring heart. He/she helps them understand what they have going for them by highlighting their strengths and celebrating their accomplishments. The coaching quiver is loaded with more questions than answers. These questions encourage ownership of both personal and ministry development and help leaders see and follow God's intended path. Your church should provide a coach for every leader who wants one.

Bill, an adult Sunday school teacher, asked for and was assigned a coach, Roger, to help him become more effective. Roger asked Bill to share his goal for the class. Bill's goal was for his students consistently to apply the Sunday school lessons to their lives. Roger asked him to define "consistently." Did he want 100% of his students to apply the lesson every week? Was that achievable? Bill agreed it probably wasn't. He'd be satisfied if 75% of the class members were experiencing life-change as a result of the lesson. Roger asked Bill how he'd determine if 75% of the class was applying the lessons to life. Bill decided that intermittently through the year he'd ask class members to write down what they'd applied to their life from the previous week's lesson. The first time he did, no one could write anything that was applied from the previous week's lesson. Roger sat in on Bill's class. He discovered that 90% or more of Bill's lesson was content-oriented and not application-oriented. He brought this to Bill's attention and asked how he'd reorient his teaching to be at least 50% application. Roger worked with Bill, more by asking questions than giving answers. One year later when Bill took one of his intermittent surveys, 70% of the students wrote down something they applied from the previous week's lesson.

Appoint someone to organize and oversee coaching.

Lead through Apprenticing

Apprenticeship multiplies ministers by combining on-the-job training and classroom instruction to teach ministry skills. It builds people into leaders as they watch, do, and experience constructive feedback. It brings one life alongside another that's moving in the right direction.

Every church needs more spiritually mature, skilled leaders. Jesus developed them by apprenticeship. This method enables churches to replace workers who move or die and to multiply laborers (e.g., small group leaders). Ten small group leaders with ten apprentices could become twenty small groups, then forty, eighty, etc. To fast forward your leadership development process, encourage apprenticeship in *every* ministry in the church.

The apprentice must be willing to give leadership a try. Without desire, ability means little. The spiritual passion, temperament, and spiritual gifts of the candidate should match the ministry. Choose FAST people (faithful, available, spirit-filled, and teachable) with strong character, positive attitude, and self-discipline. Influence, people skills, and communication skills are worth their weight in diamonds in people-oriented ministries.

A leader discovers his/her apprentice's interests, strengths, weaknesses, and goals by listening and observing. The leader gives respect, acceptance, encouragement, feedback on performance, and builds a bond of trust. The leader imparts the knowledge and skills the apprentice needs as they interact over a period of time. Sharing his/her own weaknesses and mistakes makes the role of "leader" seem attainable. The leader encourages living by faith, uses failure to teach lessons, shares ministry vision, and defines how the apprentice fits into the big picture.

Appoint someone to encourage and oversee apprenticeship in your church.

Lead through Change

Healthy leaders help a congregation accept and incorporate change in a way that builds the church. How to lead this process is described in Chapter 10, "Bringing Change to Church."

The NCD process is designed to bring healthy change to churches. Its success depends on a cooperative effort between a church health team who knows the inner workings of their church and a coach who understands what it takes to make churches healthier.

To get directions to a destination, one needs a starting location. I can't tell you how to get to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, unless I know where you are now. Similarly, before traveling in the direction of becoming healthier, a church needs an accurate understanding of its present level of health. An NCD survey is an excellent tool to define that level of health and to identify strengths and weaknesses.

Master the change principles in Chapter 10 and apply them when bringing any change to the church.

Carefully Consider Leadership Decisions and Actions

Everyone is watching you—God, Satan, unbelievers, and believers. "Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil'" (Job 1:8). God was watching Job, and he's watching you. Satan was also paying attention. You've surely discovered that people outside the church are watching if you live differently than they do. Many of them are watching and hoping you stumble to justify themselves. The people inside the church are watching too. If you treat a sloppily dressed visitor as unwanted, they'll conclude, "We don't want that kind around here!" If you organize leadership training classes, they'll understand that leadership development is important in your church. If you give mentoring lip service but don't mentor anyone yourself, they'll think it isn't that important or you'd be doing it. If you're enthusiastic about your relationship with God and your church, they'll be also.

Literally every decision you make and every action you take as leaders affects those who are part of your church and those who aren't. These decisions, made one after another, determine your present and future health as a church.

Consider what's best for the long haul for the health and growth of your church before making decisions. Think through what parts of the church will be affected by your decision/action and make necessary adjustments to nurture your church's long-term well-being.

Multiply Ministers

To maximize your ability to empower your congregation, multiply the persons who can empower others. Leaders are like electrical outlets. God is the source of the power, but human beings are usually the channel through which the power flows. If you have eighteen outlets in a gym, you can do a lot more work than with only one outlet. Those coached become coaches, those mentored become mentors, and apprentices eventually take others under their wings and show them how to do ministry.

Multiply evangelists, disciples, small groups, leaders, and churches. Make your coaching, mentoring, and apprenticing self-sustaining with those coached coaching others, etc.

Multiply Usage of Ministry Tools

Develop reusable mentoring, coaching, and apprenticing tools. For example, use the mentoring goals and agenda suggested in this chapter to mentor growing disciples. They use these same tools to mentor others who do the same with others, etc. Use your creativity. The goal is to use ministry tools as many ways and times as possible to develop others to their full potential. Instead of using Sunday school curriculum once and throwing it out, consider how you can use it three or more ways or times. An Introduction to the New Testament class could be taught by the same teacher three consecutive quarters to three different Sunday school classes.

Identify ministry tools that can be used more than once.

Harness All Energy to Build the Kingdom

Leaders, you're in the energy management business. The way you manage the energy in each person in your congregation determines your effectiveness as a church. Imagine a car dealer with 1000 cars idling in the lot all day long. That would be a tremendous waste of energy and money. An engine is operated only when someone is considering buying the car. The dealer wants to earn a maximum profit while keeping expenses to a minimum. Energy must not be wasted.

Each believer in your church has the potential energy that Paul had when he wrote, "We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so

powerfully works in me” (Colossians 1:28-29). Paul had God’s energy within him, and so does every believer in your church.

Probably more than 50% of your congregation, like cars waiting to be started, examined, and purchased, aren’t doing much right now. They’re parked in the pew, exactly where Satan wants them. They aren’t hurting him much more than if they didn’t attend church at all. Those parked can’t help but notice that a small proportion of the congregation is zipping all around the church. They’re making a difference. *They must just be special people*, the parked parishioners think. They feel unworthy. They don’t respond to pleas to get involved. Many of them don’t think they can do anything to serve the Lord. Leaders, your challenge is to help them identify their gifts, passion, temperament, and experience and tap the energy that can so powerfully work in them.

You’ve noticed that 30% or less of your congregation is zipping here and there from this task to that, like bees gathering nectar from flowers. They get things done. The challenge isn’t to get them moving, but to maximize their spiritual fruit. Some are teaching, for example, who aren’t gifted for it and don’t enjoy it. They teach because somebody has to do it. They can’t stand fourth graders, but have been teaching them for thirty years! Help these willing servants identify their gifts, passion, temperament, and experience and match them with ministries that will yield joy, fulfillment, and lasting fruit.

Some persons zip around the church with the sole intent, it seems, of undermining and undoing everything you’re trying to accomplish. One person can chase away as many guests as any five persons can bring, slow down or stop a proposed badly needed building project, or create so many relational brushfires that it keeps the pastor working full-time to put them out. These unity-challenged folks are expending energy, not to help the church achieve its mission, but to prevent it. Leaders, your challenge is to win them over and harness their energy and ideas to accomplish God’s mission. Seek their input in the early stages of ministry and program planning. If their fingerprints are on your programs and projects, they might not only support you, but rally others to do the same.

Develop strategies to harness the energy of the willing, the uncommitted, and the resistant.

Work Together as Leaders in Mutually Helpful Ways

For example, the Commission on Worship and the Commission on Christian Education can work together. If Sunday school classes and other small groups are holistic, they’ll spend part of their meeting time in worship. The Commission on Worship could train the small group leaders and Sunday school teachers how to lead worship effectively. The Christian Education Commission benefits because the worship segment helps the members experience God who inhabits the praises of his people. It helps the Worship Commission because it equips small group members and leaders to worship God more fully in the worship service.

The Building and Grounds Commission can work with the Christian Education Commission in ways that benefit both. Small groups could participate in spring cleanup at the church. Working together builds love and mutual commitment among group members. It helps

the Building and Grounds Commission by supplying the manpower they need to make the church grounds as attractive as possible.

Use your creativity to match leaders in your church to work together in ways that are mutually helpful.

Evaluate the Effectiveness of Your Small Group

To evaluate the health of your leadership, complete the Healthy Leadership Underlying Issues Inventory in Appendix A.

Chapter 3

Healthy Relationships

Lead with Love

Hemorrhage It

Love is the motive, method, and message of the Christian life. “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died” (2 Corinthians 5:14). Your primary motivation for Christian service shouldn’t be so much the push of duty (although that’s a valid motivation based on Luke 17:7-10) as much as the pull of love. Both motivations get the job done, but the push of duty dries up joy.

When it comes to loving God, neighbors, and other believers, leaders must set the pace. For the congregation to bleed love, leaders must hemorrhage it.

Model It

Love is beautifully described in 1 Corinthians 13. Leaders demonstrate God’s love by being patient with problems and problem people. Leading people in God’s ways can be as frustrating as eating tomato soup with a fork. They’re stubborn, headstrong, and repeatedly make foolish choices when they know better. When you feel like going ballistic, go supernatural. It’s your choice. You can be as patient with other believers as God has been with you or as hard on them as you want God to be on you!

Be kind. Every day make at least one person feel special. Be the first to smile or say, “Hi,” to others. Do for others what you’d want them to do for you.

Stop envying. Having the things others have or some “big cheese” position in the church or at work won’t make your life any more fulfilling. God gives you everything you need to serve him. That’s enough. More things, power, or fame wouldn’t make you more fruitful for the kingdom.

Boasting draws attention to self instead of Christ. It usually indicates underlying insecurity. Real men don’t have to prove they’re real men. People who feel capable don’t toot their own horn. Your sufficiency for every situation is in Christ, not yourself.

Pride and love don’t travel together. Love forgets self. Pride exalts self. Stop comparing yourself to others to feel better about who you are. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Rudeness is intentional unkindness. It treats others and their opinions, feelings, and desires as unimportant. It launches attacks. It interrupts. It puts down. Love protects, waits, and lifts up.

Self-seeking is the opposite of self-sacrificing. Love asks, “What’s best for you?” Self-seeking inquires, “What’s best for me?”

Control your temper, or it will control you. Fear often underlies angry outbursts. The real problem is a lack of trust in God, because fear and faith are opposites. Trust God. Don’t lash out. Angry outbursts are like throwing up on others. It makes you feel better, but it upsets everyone around you.

You have permission to record precisely the number of wrongs of others you want God to record against you. Do you need another pencil? How about another eraser?

God hates evil. Those who love Daddy don’t delight in and hug what he hates. Continued compromise with sin makes you less and less sensitive to it. You usually feel very guilty the first time you commit a sin. As you repeat it, you begin to justify it. Beware of delighting in and justifying what God hates.

Love always protects. Leaders are responsible to protect those entrusted to their spiritual care as a shepherd protects his sheep.

Love never fails. It doesn’t fail God or people. Only God can supply such love.

Select three components of 1 Corinthians 13 love in which you’re weak and write down a strategy to improve in each. Find someone who will hold you accountable.

Lead with Joy

John Piper says in *Desiring God* that God has created you to glorify him by enjoying him forever. “You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand” (Psalm 16:11). “Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me” (Psalm 51:12).

Human nature seeks happiness from the feeling of personal power that comes from overcoming some limitation. That feeling is heady stuff, but God made you to experience the thrill of his power increasing in you to make you a more loving person.

Experiencing God’s grace produces joy. “And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity” (2 Corinthians 8:1-2). May your joy in God’s grace overflow to meet the needs of others and rejoice in their joy.

Rate how God-centered your joy is on a scale of 1-10. Define three ways of thinking about God that would promote the growth of joy in your life. Do a thirty-day experiment of daily focusing on these three. In thirty days, again rate how God-centered your joy is.

Cast a Vision for Love

Cast a vision for what the church will look like when members love one another as Jesus loves them. What does such a church look like? Lives are interdependent instead of independent. When someone in a small group has a financial need, others in the group help meet it. When someone is hurting emotionally, he/she shares the hurt in the small group and is supported and encouraged by the other members. People in the church are real with each other. They don't pretend to have it all together. They encourage each other and celebrate each other's successes. They don't avoid conflict but speak the truth in love to each other. They care about those who don't yet have a relationship with God and spend their resources to reach them.

Cast a vision for what the church will look like when members love one another as Jesus loves them. Share it using at least five different instruments, e.g., pulpit, newsletter, testimonies, bulletin insert, small group leaders, etc.

Help People Find Community

Encourage persons to join small groups of twelve or fewer person that stress community and provide an environment in which they're most likely to experience love. The goal of these groups is to minister to the physical, spiritual, emotional, social, and intellectual needs of their members. See Chapter 1 for details.

At least once each month emphasize from the pulpit the importance of everyone's being a part of a small group in the church. Use testimonies from people who are benefiting from small group involvement.

Spend Time with Other Leaders

If leaders don't spend time in one another's homes, the congregation won't spend time in each other's homes. To love one another, lives must intertwine outside the walls of the sanctuary. Schedule activities together with other leaders that'll help you get to know one another better—work together, play together, pray together, serve together, travel together, etc.

At least six times in the next year spend time outside of scheduled meetings or church activities with other members of your leadership team.

Celebrate Victories

A boy in my home church was a state wrestling champion in his age group and weight class. A few weeks after he won, I shook his right hand during our worship service greeting time. After shaking it, I raised it up over his head as a wrestling referee does to signal the winner at the end of a match. He got a big grin on his face. It brought back pleasant memories for him and made him feel good all over again. Celebrating write-ups of church members in the newspaper, awards, and achievements demonstrates that the church cares. Celebrating the church's accomplishments fosters joy and a team spirit which is closely connected to love.

In high school, my daughter competed in track and field for three years. Her team lost twenty-seven meets in a row! She didn't feel very good about it. By contrast, when I went to

college, our track team won twenty-seven meets in a row! I was proud to be a part of that team. Many people aren't very enthusiastic about their church. They see themselves as losers. They compare themselves to Bigger and Better Church of the Ascension down the road and feel inferior. One way to grow in love for the church team God has given you is to celebrate victories.

When I was pastor at the Saxton First Church of God, we had a mission project for Bibles for India. We gave \$10 seed money to persons who wanted to participate. The challenge was to multiply that money as much as possible using the talents and abilities we each had. Our folks did an incredible job. I received a letter from Bibles for India that reported that the amount of money our church gave was the most they'd ever received from one church. We celebrated! Our folks felt better about themselves and the church as a result. Don't wait to celebrate until you've broken the 200 barrier in worship (especially if you're averaging thirty-five now!). Set some goals that are easy to achieve, and celebrate their accomplishment. Build momentum. As people begin to feel better and better about themselves and their church, they're far more likely to invite others to attend church with them.

Every week celebrate at least one victory in your church during the worship service.

Build Loving Traditions

Create traditions that make persons feel loved such as an appreciation banquet for church workers; a banquet to celebrate high school, technical school, and college graduation; a church ministry spotlighted each month; Christmas parties; handing out Bibles to high school graduates with a personal message from a youth leader or pastor; a banquet for fathers or mothers; church scholarship awards to those pursuing ministry as a vocation; etc.

In the next year, start at least one tradition that makes persons in your church feel loved.

Let Go of Past Hurts

Many of us are love-challenged. We can't focus on loving others because we spend too much energy trying to turn the real childhood we experienced into something it can't be—perfectly satisfying. As children we weren't as loved as we desired, and now we're trying to fix it. Like a house that was washed away by Katrina's storm surge in Mississippi in 2005, our childhood is gone. There's no going back. Let it be over. We might blame our parents for not loving us to the extent and in the way we desired, but they probably didn't receive the love they wanted as children either. They're fellow sufferers.

Addictions are symptoms. We try to fill the love vacuum from our childhood with substitutes. One of the signs of addiction is that when we start something we find it difficult to stop. I'm addicted to good throws with the discus. Those throws for me don't occur regularly. There are too many things that can go wrong and often do. I frequently practice to exhaustion trying to end my practice session with three good throws in a row. I understand how unlikely it is, but I keep trying. Alcoholics don't necessarily drink every day, all day. When they start drinking, they can't stop. Part of the solution is acknowledging our powerlessness. Only God can deliver us from these controlling influences. Allowing him to do so is our choice. The underlying

issue is that we're trying to fix our broken childhood through our addiction. Let it be over. Let God make up for what you lacked as a child. Speaking of Israel and by extension all those who are his, God says, "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I won't forget you!" (Isaiah 49:15). Let God fill the love vacuum in your life.

Schedule services at least quarterly where people are encouraged to let go of past hurts and let God fill the love vacuum in their lives.

Fill-Up with God's Love

Imagine two plastic bottles with caps. One has an inch of swamp water and the other is filled to the brim with clear, clean spring water. Remove the caps. The swamp water quickly fills the room with the smell of rotten eggs. The other bottle unexplainably gushes in a fountain of spring water that never stops.

The bottle with the swamp water represents human love. It's in short supply and it stinks. It's love "because of." We love someone because that person is our wife, husband, son, or daughter. We love a friend because of what he's done for us. Such love is built on human trustworthiness, which is a sand foundation. Sooner or later others always disappoint us and let us down. If we depend on the love we can generate to love God, our neighbor, and other believers, we'll fail miserably.

The second bottle represents God's love. "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7). Love comes from God. Trust God to love others through you. Calvary love enables us to love others in spite of their sin, rebellion, and killer bee-nastiness.

At the services where people are encouraged to let go of past hurts, challenge them and everyone else to be a channel of God's love to others.

Wear Others' Glasses

Seek to understand how your neighbor sees the world. Society emphasizes tolerating people who are different than you are. That's closer to indifference than love. It takes a lot more effort to understand others than to merely tolerate their views. All views of the world aren't equally valid and true. You don't have to agree with how others see the world. Taking the time to understand how they see it and why demonstrates that you care. Caring builds a bridge between you and others.

Intentionally wear another's glasses at least once each day.

Be Honest

Stealing, lying, and cheating destroy credibility. If you hear a stranger bragging about how he lied and cheated on his income tax, you're not very motivated to get to know him better.

You don't naturally love persons you can't trust. "Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies" (Psalm 34:13). "He who has been stealing must steal no longer..." (Ephesians 4:28a). Being honest with others doesn't mean you need to share everything. Just because you see a fault in a friend doesn't mean you must tell her about it. There's a love/honesty balance. God doesn't convict you of all the areas in your life that don't measure up to his Son, Jesus. He mixes love and honesty in perfect balance. You need to depend on him to give you the wisdom to know which issues to confront and which to let go.

Confront others about issues that negatively affect them, others, and God and let go of issues that don't. Pray for wisdom to know the difference.

Be Vulnerable

Loving relationships include being vulnerable. Not only do some of you have perfect attendance pins from your Sunday school experience, your "I've got it all together" mask has perfect attendance too! You're afraid you might be the only one who's struggling. If you share about your marriage, your kids, your financial struggles, etc., others might think less of you. The truth is that *everyone* struggles.

Leaders can help others open up by sharing at least one area in which they're struggling. I remember a Campus Crusade for Christ small group leader who shared that he struggled with lust whenever he went to the beach. I'd been a Christian for about eight years and that was the very first time I heard a spiritual leader share a weakness. That one admission on his part made spiritual leadership seem more attainable. I realized that small group leaders are sinners too.

People who know they can share their feelings and problems in confidence in their church almost always consider that church loving. That's the single best love thermometer in churches in the Eastern Regional Conference and why it's crucial for leaders to provide an atmosphere where confidential sharing can take place.

Encourage small groups to use a small group covenant that spells out the expectation of confidentiality.

Forgive

Forgiveness means letting go of hard feelings and any attempt to get even with an offender. You can't love someone you can't forgive. It doesn't matter how great the offense, forgiveness isn't optional for those who want God to forgive them (Matthew 6:14-15). Understand how enormous your forgiven sin debt is. The parable in Matthew 18:23-35 concerns forgiveness. The man who owed 10,000 talents (30 million days' pay) to the king represents your sins against God. The man who owed 100 days' pay to a fellow servant illustrates the sins of others against you. Others' sins against you are as nothing compared to your sins against God. You're forgiven! Pass it on! Loving others means not holding their sins against them.

Whom do you need to forgive? Whose forgiveness do you need to seek? Communicate forgiveness to or ask forgiveness from that person within the next week.

Listen Well

A husband went to church on a day his wife was sick. She was curious about what she missed, so she asked him what the pastor's sermon was about. The husband responded that it was about sin. She asked what he said, and the husband replied, "He was against it." He probably did not listen to her very well either! Listening demonstrates love. If you take the time to understand well enough to verbalize what others think and how they feel about what they think, you might be the very first and last person to pay them that much respect that day. Listening demonstrates caring.

At least once each day listen to your spouse or a close friend with your whole body. Summarize what you understand is being said and felt about the issue.

Surprise with Thoughtful Gifts

In 2005, the throwers from the Middletown Area High School track and field team presented me with a Life Application Bible. I was totally surprised. That Bible rests on the left side of my desk. I use it frequently. Their gift was both thoughtful and surprising.

God's gift to humanity was both thoughtful and surprising. He gave us what we needed most—his Son to take our place on Calvary's cross to pay the penalty for our sin. We know the story so well that we take it for granted. The President's assuming the death sentence of a serial killer wouldn't even come close to God's assuming our death sentence in the person of his Son. It's so unthinkable, no one would've made it up!

To whom can you give a surprising, thoughtful gift? Some persons never feel more loved than when they receive a gift.

At least six times a year, surprise persons in your church with a thoughtful gift.

Lighten Up

I should take my own advice. I take life too seriously. I could identify my co-worker Jim Moss, Sr. in an audience of 1000 people with my eyes closed if I heard his distinctive laugh. Hardly anyone could identify me by my laugh, including me! If I heard my laugh on tape along with ten others, I'm not sure I could pick it out. I don't laugh very much. I'm not bragging. It's just a fact.

In my position as Associate for Discipleship, I've preached the same sermon in many different churches in the Eastern Regional Conference. I've noticed great variation in response to humorous portions of messages. Some churches laugh loudly, whereas others barely laugh at all. Why is the response so varied from church to church?

Both the joy that overflows into laughter and love come from the same Spirit. Where there's joy and love, there's laughter. The thirty-three Eastern Regional Conference churches that have taken a Natural Church Development survey show a very strong correlation (.74) between

the amount of joy and laughter in the church on one hand and how loving the relationships are on the other. Laughter is like a thermometer that doesn't make the weather hot or cold outside but measures the temperature inside the church. Laughter doesn't make a church loving, but it's abundantly present in loving churches. Love and laughter live on the same block. People only laugh when they feel safe.

Create an atmosphere where laughter is welcomed and invited.

Spend Time Together

Loving relationships are built through shared experiences. "Every day they continued to meet together in temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts" (Acts 2:46). Relationships and love grow when people eat, talk, worship, study, shop, work, relax, minister, and pray together.

Encourage leaders to develop strategies to help people connect with each other outside regular services and meetings.

Identify and Use Your Spiritual Gifts

Christ's body grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:16). Love grows as everyone in the church fits into God's plan. One way to make relationships more loving in your church is to help each believer find and commit to the ministry for which God designed him or her. As each believer does that work, the body functions as it should. Just as blood bathes every part of a properly functioning body, so love bathes the whole church when each part does its work. See Chapter 7 for details.

Speak the Right Language

Dr. Gary Chapman in *The Five Love Languages* says that not everyone speaks the same love language. Just as missionaries learn the language of persons they're seeking to reach for Christ, we need to learn the love language of others. We each have more than one love language, but one is our "mother tongue." I heard one of my female throwers lamenting that her mother decided not to attend her last home track meet. "Thanks a lot, Mom!" she uttered aloud with great frustration and disappointment. That girl threw very poorly that day because she was weighed down with a heavy heart. Her love language is spending quality time, but her mother probably doesn't know it.

Another thrower consistently asked me immediately after taking a throw, "Was that better?" I suspect love is communicated best to her through words of affirmation. People with this love language can't hear "I love you" enough. Perhaps you heard the story of the man whose wife was frustrated to tears because he never said those words. One day she got up the courage to confront him about it. He said, "I told you twenty-four years ago on our wedding day that I love you. If I change my mind, I'll let you know." That approach definitely won't cut it with someone who feels loved best through words of affirmation.

In 2006 I rewarded my throwers for scoring points or throwing a personal best in a track meet. They received one Hershey Kiss for every meet point scored and two for every personal best throwing performance up to a maximum of five kisses. One mother said jokingly, "I heard you've been giving the girls kisses!" I awarded them the day after the meet. The last meet of the season was the last day of track and field for my throwers who didn't qualify for the conference championships. One thrower asked how Hershey Kisses would be awarded since most of the kids wouldn't be at practice the next day. She didn't know I'd decided to bring them to the meet and distribute them immediately. I suspect that receiving gifts is her primary love language. She feels love in other ways as well but most loved when someone gives her a gift.

Being served is the primary love language of some persons in your church. Mowing the lawn of an elderly widow with this love language makes her feel loved more than giving her gifts or saying, "I love you." This is one of my love languages, but not the primary one. One of my throwers in 2006 didn't have a high level of throwing skill. He didn't score a single meet point all season, but he was my right-hand man. When equipment needed carried, meet results recorded, or whatever, he was there to do it. I felt especially close to him.

Physical touch is my primary love language. Back rubs are heavenly! The same thrower who consistently asked me, "Was that better?" also high-fived me and other teammates after a successful throw. Both physical touch and words of affirmation were ways she felt loved by others, with words of affirmation being primary.

It's especially important to learn the love language of those in your small group. Jesus knew what we need and gave it to us by dying on Calvary's cross. He commanded us to love one another as he loved us. Part of loving one another is finding what the persons in our small group need, and giving it to them.

Discover the primary love language of each person in your small group, and learn to speak multiple love languages.

Serve Others

Serving Jesus' followers (John 21:15-17) is one way we show we love him. We serve best when we use our spiritual and natural gifts. I went with a group from my church to help in the Hurricane Katrina relief efforts in Gulfport, Mississippi. I helped, but I was an unskilled laborer. With drywall skills, I could've been more helpful. Some acts of service can be performed by anyone (doing dishes after the church's fellowship meal), but most of our service energy should be "skilled labor," i.e., in harmony with our giftedness from God.

We also demonstrate God's love when we serve "down-and-out" believers. "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25:40).

Identify the "least" in your church family or small group who need the most help and also one or two skills, God-given gifts, or resources you can use to serve them and others.

Commit to a Small Group

In a small group, you can share victories, defeats, and needs; encourage each other; hold each other accountable; serve each other; worship together; minister together; evangelize together; learn together; have fun together; eat together; and pray together. “Together” activities can make you a more loving person, group, and church.

Join a small group if you’re not already in one. If you’re in a group that isn’t intentionally closed, at least once each month invite a person who isn’t in a group to join you.

Reach Out to the Unchurched

One practical way to demonstrate God’s love is to reach out to those who don’t yet know him personally. As you pray for, demonstrate love in practical ways, and share how Christ has made a difference in your life with your unsaved friends, family, and associates, your love for them will continue to grow. Love is patient (1 Corinthians 13:4). It takes time, God’s grace, and consistent witness for people to move from resisting God to wanting to serve him. See Chapter 6 for details.

Make Prayer Connections

Relationships are strengthened and mutual love grows when people pray together. Private prayer is good, but prayer with others is even better. “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven” (Matthew 18:19). Organize prayer partners in your church, beginning with partners who pray for the pastor’s current concerns and requests.

Saturate your ministries with prayer. Leaders should pray regularly for every member for whom they’re responsible. Members pray for those in positions of responsibility over them.

Read and apply the principles described in “The Prayer-Saturated Church” by Cheryl Sacks.

Develop Mentoring Connections

Mentors show love by giving their lives away to develop others. Mentoring builds a close, loving relationship between mentors and mentoring partners. To understand basic principles of mentoring read *The Heart of Mentoring* by David A. Stoddard. The goal is to turn mentoring partners into mentors who form mentoring chains throughout the church. See Chapter 2 for more details on mentoring.

If God so leads, tell your pastor or youth leader you’d like to mentor someone.

Share Your Talents

Offer God your body as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). When God has your body, he has your talents and abilities. Your church grows in love when members offer these to bless one

another. Your talents and abilities are separate from your spiritual gifts which you receive when you're born again. For example, I was born with the coordination to be athletic. It's a natural ability. Since being born again, I try to use it to bless others by coaching track and field throwing events. Do you have mechanical ability? Use it to bless single mothers who need someone to change their oil. Are you good with numbers? Tutor a struggling student in math.

Use your God-given abilities and talents to bless others.

Give Your Time

Your time isn't your own. I'm not talking about the time you give your employer who pays you. "And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Corinthians 5:15). Jesus paid for your time—all of it. How you use it demonstrates your priorities and commitment to Christ. You can spend your free time, like your energy and material resources, however you choose. A tithe of your waking hours (assuming eight hours of sleep each night) is about eleven or twelve hours a week. Instead of waiting for opportunities to serve God sporadically, be proactive. Giving your time is one way to tell God, your neighbor, and your brothers and sisters in Christ, "I love you!"

Schedule at least ten hours each week to spend time with and serve God. Determine how best to fill that time consistent with your spiritual passion, spiritual and natural gifts, temperament, and life experience.

Share Your Money

Jesus said, "You cannot serve both God and Money" (Matthew 6:24). Material things compete with God for your affection. "Don't love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world" (1 John 2:15-16). How you spend your money demonstrates your priorities and commitment to Christ. Think of your weekly offering envelope as a Valentine's Day card to God with a check in it. The check reveals the depth of your love for God, your neighbor, and your fellow-believers.

Evaluate how well your giving says, "I love you!" to God, your neighbor, and fellow-believers.

Tune Up Your Obedience

"This is how we know that we love the children of God by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome" (1 John 5:2-3). Notice the close connection among loving brothers and sisters in Christ, loving God and obeying God's commands. Tuning up your obedience strengthens your love for God and other brothers and sisters in Christ.

One day my car rebelled. The cylinders weren't firing properly. I barely made it up a steep hill between my house and the auto mechanic's garage. Often my obedience is like that; it

isn't firing on all cylinders. Partial, delayed, or grudging obedience all show I love someone or something more than the person commanding obedience.

Suppose your math teacher assigns all the problems on page 313. You probably aren't in school anymore, but please humor me. Partial obedience is doing only the odd-numbered ones. Delayed obedience is doing all the problems on Friday when they were due last Tuesday. Grudging obedience is doing all the problems by the due date but muttering under your breath the whole time about your slave-driving teacher. Complete obedience is doing what God tells you to do, when he tells you to do it with a humble, submissive attitude because his commands aren't burdensome.

Examine to what extent your obedience is complete, immediate, willing, and motivated by love for God. Ask God for grace to make necessary adjustments.

Visit the Hospitalized and Homebound

To bless as a visitor, become an inquisitor. Rest your mouth and use your ears. Listen well to seasoned seers. Go to learn, not to teach. Go to pray, not to preach.

Love and listen to senior saints, and your mutual love will grow. Sometimes senior saints in failing health question why God allows them to live when life has lost all its zest. With lots of time to pray, they could supercharge your church's ministry engine. Recruit them to your prayer team. You have a prayer team, right! Make sure they know how vital their prayers are. Your ministry won't be the same, and, with a purpose for living, neither will their lives.

A warm, supportive visit to a hospitalized or homebound person shows love. People are seldom more open to spiritual things than when they're lying on their back staring at the same hospital or bedroom ceiling day after day. For several years my brother Jim provided part-time help for his next-door-neighbor's business. When the going got rough, that man and his wife knew where to turn for help. On May 5, 2006, the man's wife invited Jim to their house to talk to her husband about spiritual things. The doctors said he had thirty days or fewer to live. Both he and his wife received Jesus as their Savior. The following day he was no longer able to carry on a conversation. In another day, he was dead. Sharing the gospel with another is one of the most long-lasting ways to say, "I love you!"

Visit the hospitalized and homebound, especially those who are in your small group. Read Scripture to and pray for them. Point them to Jesus, the source of all they need.

Ask for Advice

One way to build a relationship with another is to ask for advice. Everyone knows more about some things than you do. As you allow others to meet your needs, the love between you grows. You might ask someone in your small group who has expertise, for example, how to prune grapes, install drywall, fillet a fish, bake a coconut cake, or make some craft item.

Within the next three months ask advice from at least one person in your small group and from a friend, relative, or neighbor whom you'd like to influence for Christ.

Bear with One Another

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2). In heaven you won't have problems getting along with others because you'll be just like Jesus and so will they! For now, however, the challenge is to bear with other believers in love who naturally clash with your personality. If getting along with others were always easy, you wouldn't need God's grace! Getting along with others is similar to dealing with arthritis. It isn't going to be easy or fun. You have to make the best of it. Love is the pain pill that gets you through. It reduces the annoyance to a bearable level. You've at least one believer in your life God has planted to send you repeatedly back for a fresh filling of his grace and love. Becoming more like Jesus is more important than having all your relationships go smoothly.

Identify the “extra grace” people God has planted in your life. Pray for them regularly.

Resolve Conflict

Your church will be more loving when you deal with conflict instead of sweeping it under the rug and pretending it doesn't exist. Unresolved conflict doesn't go away any more than ignored termites in your house do. The termites of unresolved conflict in your church won't leave, but the tense atmosphere, which visitors can sense, will send many of them away never to return.

In “3 Colors of Church Life (Part 3)” published in eNCDine online magazine in April 2006, Dr. John M. Stephenson, Senior Pastor of Anona United Methodist Church in Tampa Bay (USA) wrote:

One of the most striking changes at Anona since working on the NCD theology and process through the years is the authentic nature of relationships. Having loving relationships doesn't mean they're always pain free.

Christian living teaches us the opposite. Sustainability in loving someone means working through those things that would cause you to either run from the relationship or bury the relationship in a funeral of silence... Through the years we've had to work through church issues and personalities that would've divided us and in fact at times did. Even an example of a healthy church like Anona has to deal often and honestly with hurt feelings, disappointed expectations, broken promises, and ignored feelings...

...When we let go of the temptation to demonize others and instead love them when they disagree with us or even seek to harm us, we're doing the difficult daily work of Christian faith. This isn't just outward action. There has to be a renewal of the mind, a transformation of the inward feelings and a reality check about the stories we tell ourselves about the other person if we're to attain the “mind which was in Christ Jesus.”

Through the years my daughter, Lisa, and I have a code word for the need for times of confrontation and working on our relationship. We call them "cheese toast talks." ...When we needed to work through to a place where we could reconcile, we found ourselves making cheese toast in the kitchen. During the several minutes it took for the cheese to melt on the toast, we found ourselves labeling what had gotten between us and assuming the best in the other person. By the time we finished eating our toast we were usually laughing again at the clumsy ways the human side of us continues to stumble in loving each other.

Those kinds of conversations are rare in unhealthy churches and constant in healthy ones. The high score in loving relationships doesn't mean everything is "sticky sweet." It often means things are real. They're authentic. The people invest in each other enough to assume the best and to confront the worst, to "tell the truth in love." This takes time outside of church meetings or worship. It takes meals together, sharing a cup of coffee, or waiting in the parking lot for reconciliation. What "cheese toast talk" could improve the character of your church's loving relationships?

Here are some guidelines for your "cheese toast talk." The following material is adapted from "Resolving Conflict in Marriage" by Dr. Todd E. Linaman on Family Life Communications website and the Colorado School Mediation Project website.

1. Don't react—Launching into a verbal attack in a conflict situation is like aiming a fan at a forest fire. It makes an already bad situation worse. "When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise" (Proverbs 10:19).
2. Set a resolution process and place—Set up a process to handle the conflict that both sides agree ahead of time is fair. Don't meet in the nursery if the conflict is over the color of the paint there! Set apart a "Peace Room" in the church to resolve conflicts.
3. Accept responsibility—Each side must accept responsibility for part of the problem. Both must look in the mirror to take the plank out of their own eye before they can see clearly to remove the speck of sawdust from the eyes of the other side (Matthew 7:1-5).
4. Recognize a faith test—The faith of both sides is being tested (James 1:2-3). You need God's wisdom (James 1:5) and trust in his power to resolve the conflict. Ask God for the grace to forgive, and he'll give it (1 John 5:14-15).
5. Address the real problem—Employ this format to define the problem behind the conflict without using names: I feel (such and such) because (such and such) has happened. Take time outs whenever emotion starts to take control. Loss of control and feelings of vulnerability are often underlying issues. The goal isn't to fix blame, but to solve the problem and strengthen relationships.
6. Really listen to the other side—Each side should summarize accurately how the opposing side views and feels about the problem causing the conflict.
7. Suggest changes—Both sides should explain what they want to change about the situation or relationship and why.
8. Seek win-win solutions—Decide together how to change the situation or relationship so both sides will benefit.
9. Be patient—Conflict resolution and the healing of emotional pain take time, but aim for complete restoration of loving relationships.

Encourage Others

Almost every basketball or football team plays better at home than away because of the encouragement and support of the home fans. Encouraging other believers releases energy to achieve the church's mission. When a class member encourages and praises her teacher for an excellent lesson that really applied to life, the teacher will be motivated out of her socks to produce another excellent lesson the following week! Human nature repeats behavior that's rewarded.

In 1994 when I was the pastor of the Saxton First Church of God, I sent encouragement cards to persons in the congregation. I sent one to our organist and expressed my appreciation for her playing the organ in our services and how much we missed her when she wasn't able to play. The next time I saw her she said, "You didn't have to do that! But I'm surely glad you did!" The advantage of written encouragement cards is that one can read them again and again. In my desk, I have a stack of cards and notes I've received. They're better than an equal weight of chocolate candy! They remind me I'm making a difference and help me stay motivated.

Encouragement can make those who feel like quitting continue. Part way through the 2006 track season one of my freshman throwers wanted to quit. He said he was wasting his time. He was not very successful. He thought lifting weights to prepare for football would be a better use of his time than being out for track and field. I told him he had the strength to be a good thrower (he does!) but his body parts weren't yet firing in the right sequence. He needed to persevere. He came back to compete in 2007 and had improved significantly in all three throwing events. Encouragement works the same way in the church. People are empowered by others who believe in them.

Another thrower I coached threw the discus extremely well as a freshman in 2006. I told him that if he worked hard between that season and the 2007 season, he had the potential to be a three-time state champion in the discus. One way to encourage people in the church and to love them is to share what you see them becoming by the grace of God. Many pastors have entered full-time ministry because their own pastor or some other significant person in their life saw pastoral potential in them. God calls persons into ministry, but he often does so through the words of another human being.

Encouraging words build confidence. One of the girls I coached in 2006 was struggling in the discus in an invitational meet in which she was expected to win based on past performance. She was extremely tense (by her own admission), resulting in her throwing poorly on her first three attempts. She was trying too hard and losing confidence in her ability. She was in fourth place entering the finals where she'd have three more throws. I took her aside before the finals and told her to imagine she was throwing from the discus ring at Hershey High School where she'd thrown very well. I told her that she always throws farther in practice than she'd thrown so far. She just had to relax and let it happen. On her first throw in the finals, she moved into first place by inches. On her last throw of the competition, she beat the second place finisher's best throw by ten feet. With her confidence restored, she performed up to her potential. The same principle works in the church. Encouragement builds the confidence necessary to excel. Encouraging others is a practical way to say, "I love you."

The key to encouragement is to look for what others are doing right and pat them on the back for it. A pat on the back is far more empowering, motivating, and energizing than a kick in the pants. For those whose personality is best described as steady (an S on the DiSC), appreciation is a primary motivational need. Without it, many won't keep ministering. They'll conclude, without appreciation, that they aren't doing a very good job. People, no matter what their temperament, benefit from encouragement. Leaders modeling encouragement empower others to do the same. Use cards, notes, phone calls, or e-mail to express love and affirmation.

Look in your small group, your ministry, and your church for persons to lift up. Every week encourage someone for the work he/she is doing for the Lord.

Sow Love Extravagantly

Every loving action has the potential to produce an ever-expanding ripple effect that can last for generations. The transforming power of Jesus' supreme loving action of self-sacrifice on the cross has traveled undiminished through twenty centuries. The response to it of faith and grateful love continues to expand. A person touched by a loving action responds as the Parable of the Sower describes (Matthew 13:1-23). The farmer's intent is for all the seed (love) to reproduce after its kind, but that happens only in the good soil of a receptive heart. In such a heart, love received fills the heart with gratitude and overflows to become love given to God, neighbor and fellow believers. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). If that love given finds another receptive heart, the ripple effect continues. There's no predicting how many lives will be impacted in your church today by a single loving deed much less how many will be impacted by it fifty years in the future. "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Galatians 6:9-10). Today's loving deed may through a round-about route touch the hearts of your great great great grandchildren whom you'll never see this side of eternity!

Don't be miserly with your seeds. God's seed supply is infinite. Sow love extravagantly.

Multiply Love Distributors

Confession of faith, baptism, joining the church, tithing, regular attendance, daily devotions, or a ministry in the church aren't the goal. You can do all these things without loving God, your neighbor, or your brothers and sisters in Christ. You can't love them, however, and not do these things. Your church's effectiveness is directly proportional to its number of love distributors. Making more and better disciples is making more and better lovers of God, neighbors, and other believers. Is that a core value of your church?

The number of love distributors in your church today is influenced by what your church has emphasized through its history, especially its recent history. If your doctrine is as pure as the driven snow, but your relationships aren't very loving, you've missed the main point. Your recent tradition probably hasn't emphasized loving relationships and your leaders haven't modeled them. That needs to change.

There's no better time to start than right now. Leaders must set the pace. Some of the persons leaders love will pass it on to others, some of whom will pass it on to others, etc. Gradually the atmosphere in your church will warm up! How effectively you're multiplying distributors of God's love greatly affects the health of your church.

Make loving God, neighbors, and other believers a core value in your church.

Make Love Self-Sustaining

In the strictest sense, you can't make love self-sustaining in the church because it comes from God (1 John 4:7). Your role is to provide the kind of atmosphere that will maximize the hearts that are receptive to the love that ultimately comes from God. Consider using *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman in small groups and Sunday school classes. One teacher could repeatedly teach the material to one group or class at a time. The first goal is for Sunday school class and small group members to discover their primary love language and also that of the other members in their group. The second is to work at becoming "multi-lingual" and able to communicate love to people who speak a "foreign love language." In large churches, a teacher could multiply love distributors through a turbo-class in which all the students will become teachers.

Another tool to build love is to give people in your church the opportunity to minister together to the needy, whether it's home construction (e.g., Habitat for Humanity), home maintenance (e.g., raking leaves for the elderly), food distribution, hurricane relief, etc. Not only do these teams demonstrate God's love to those to whom they minister, but at the same time they strengthen the bonds of love among themselves.

Leaders who demonstrate love in practical ways to both church and unchurched sow seeds that may yield a harvest in those they love. At the same time, by their example, they motivate other persons in the congregation to reach out and meet the needs of others. As leaders persist in demonstrating love, the relationships in the congregation will become more interdependent, and love will become more self-sustaining. The primary role of leaders isn't to make decisions for the church because they're smarter than everyone else. It's to model love because they're more grateful than everyone else.

Organize work teams to minister to the needy locally and in more distant places.

God "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20). You can love others through God's power in ways and to an extent you couldn't even imagine! That potential is in every believer in your church.

Perhaps as a leader you're not yet an open channel through whom love can flow. You can't speak any of the five languages of love because as a child you never experienced them. You don't like the person you see in the mirror. You're negative, critical, and legalistic. Let God show you the love your parents never did. He's already adopted you into his family. Let him and the rest of his family make up for what your birth family lacked. Others in the congregation are

just like you. They need to be set free from the shackles of the past. You must show them how, perhaps walking only a half step ahead of them yourself as a wounded healer.

Harness the potential love of the uncommitted majority who has never done much of anything with their faith. Connect as many as possible to a small group and a ministry. You won't get them all, but you'll significantly improve the loving atmosphere in your church.

Since one way of demonstrating love is using your spiritual gifts, make sure those who are already ministering are in the right place so the church can grow and build itself up in love as each part does its work.

Maximize the flow of God's love by modeling, teaching, and providing practical ways for your congregation to show it to each other and their neighbors.

Work Together to Maximize Love

Do together to glue together. Connecting with other ministries to do projects around the church, in the community, or beyond the community strengthens the ties that bind leaders and ministries together. One of the benefits of my trip to Mississippi for hurricane relief work in 2006 was strengthened relationships with the other members of the team. We did more and better work by teaming together, and we learned to love one another more.

Explore ways to work together with other ministries in your church to share God's love with people in practical ways.

Evaluate the Effectiveness of Your Relationships

To evaluate the health of your church's relationships, complete the Healthy Relationships Underlying Issues Inventory in Appendix A.

Chapter 4

Healthy Spirituality

Choose to Fizz

Be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord (Romans 12:11). In 1976 while I was visiting a church in the former East Pennsylvania Conference to raise financial support as a Campus Crusade for Christ staff member, I was asked by the pastor, “What’s the least we can give?” Spiritually passionate persons don’t ask such questions. They’re aiming for the maximum, not the minimum.

Maybe you’re not the fervent type. You’re laid back, not a warm, bubbly personality. I can identify with that, but I’d be surprised if you’re not fervent about something. What do others think of when they think of you? What excites you? What do you think about when you’re free to think about anything? If you can bubble up about something, you can bubble up about God and his church.

Pentecost transformed the apostles from fearful followers into passionate evangelists. The Holy Spirit, who took up residence in their hearts, made the difference. Passion is the smoke of the Spirit’s fire. Where there’s smoke, there’s fire. We’re naturally passionate about our own kingdom, not God’s. “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Thessalonians 2:14). Spiritual passion reveals that the Holy Spirit is at work. “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire” (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Healthy believers and churches feed the fire. Unhealthy ones put it out. People everywhere are looking for something to get excited about and give their lives to. They’re influenced by passionate believers whose faith brings them joy.

“Blahs-ianity” is passionate spirituality’s chief competitor. Doing and saying “right things” without passion angers God. “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Matthew 15:8). Rote prayers, unthinking singing during services, ministering to others to receive recognition, using positions in the church for personal power, years of perfect Sunday school attendance without applying anything, one hour per week Christian commitment (worship or Sunday school, but not both), and tradition-driven ministry are various ways the modern church demonstrates far-away hearts.

When you open a soft drink can, it fizzes immediately. Bubbles rise continually. That’s a picture of fervent, boiling faith. You know how it feels. You experienced it when you were a new believer. If you allow the soft drink to sit for a day in a glass, the fizz and bubbles disappear. It’s flat. Time, disappointing experiences, and the wear and tear of life can take the vitality out of your faith. Unless you work hard to maintain the fizz, you’ll become apathetic, lazy, indifferent, and just go through the motions without any heart. Is your fizz gone? That’s a critical loss if you’re a church member, but a mortal blow to the future of the church if you’re a leader, because you set the pace. Remember—you can choose your attitude.

Choose to fizz! Work at fizzing! Don't be satisfied with less.

Seek Joy in God

Seek joy where it can be found. Where you hunt for it determines your success. You won't find diamonds at the Dollar General Store except on the fingers of the shoppers. You have to look where they can be found. God made you to experience the greatest possible joy from knowing him and doing his will. God has a monopoly on joy. "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field" (Matthew 13:44). The psalmists experienced joy because of God's presence (16:11, 21:6), word (19:8, 119:14), salvation (51:12), love (90:14), work (92:4), and comfort (94:19).

List ten reasons you find joy in God.

Fizz and Buzz

Your congregation's fizz and buzz factors reveal its vitality. Passionate believers fizz up with joy, enthusiasm, and zeal. They volunteer to serve the Lord—no arm-twisting required! Their words reveal their passion. At church fellowship dinners, women's group, men's group, youth, and church council meetings, they buzz about Jesus. At prayer meetings, Sunday school classes, small group meetings, and worship services, they buzz about him. They not only talk about him, but they love, live for and serve him gladly and willingly. Does that sound like you and your church?

Rate your church's fizz and buzz on a scale of 1-10.

Pursue Passion and Maturity

Spiritual passion isn't spiritual maturity. Both spiritually mature believers and new believers are passionate. When the Holy Spirit brings new birth, passionate spirituality can appear as quickly as a fire started by a burning match tossed on gasoline-soaked wood. It comes without any effort, but it doesn't remain long-term without effort. You have to feed the fire. Spiritual maturity requires tending that fire for two years or more through reading God's word, praying, sharing your faith with others, obeying, serving and worshipping God, and fellowshiping with other believers. Maturity is evidenced by productive ministry, Christ-like character (fruit of the Spirit), and a lifestyle of dependence on God and interdependence with other believers.

Like a family, your church has persons at varying levels of spiritual maturity. As parents set the tone in the family, the most mature believers in your church determine its atmosphere and expectations. If they're led by the Spirit, thankful, burdened for the lost, joyful, loving, humble, forgiving, obedient to God, supportive and encouraging, and mutually submissive, the whole church's atmosphere will reflect God's transforming presence and define what a Christian in your church is supposed to be.

Describe both the size of your spiritual fire (embers, two-inch flame, two-foot flame, or raging bonfire) and how you're feeding it.

Think like a Winner

When the Pittsburgh Steelers won the Super Bowl in 2006, I was elated. It was their first championship in many years. Winning feels better than losing. It is exciting to have been part of the track and field teams at Millersville University (Pennsylvania) in 1969 and 1970 that are the only ones in school history ever to win the conference championship. When your favorite teams are winning, you talk and think more about them than when they aren't. The church is a winner! "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18). Think about it! Talk about it! Get excited about it! It might not seem like a winner now, but the game isn't over yet.

Do you think of your church more as a winner or a loser? What difference does seeing it as a winner make?

Think Biblically

It's easier to control thoughts than feelings, yet they're very much connected. Thoughts dig the channels in which feelings flow. One way to increase your spiritual passion is to think more biblically about God, yourself, and your world. Remind yourself of your identity in Christ, and passion will rise up within you. Personalize God's word. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on [your name], that [your name] should be called a child of God! And that is what [your name] is!" (1 John 3:1, paraphrased). Read it three times. It makes you smile, doesn't it?

Your Daddy formed the universe out of nothing! He can do anything, yet he knows your name, cares about, and believes in you. No one is just like you. He made you to experience joy by carrying out a specific part of his unfolding plan designed uniquely for you. That makes you incredibly significant, but it also means you won't find lasting joy anywhere else.

Joy results from thinking biblically and truly about God, yourself and your world. God does not condemn you if you're in Christ Jesus, even though he knows your faults. That should make your day! "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1-2). God owns everything, and you're his heir. That's something to get excited about! "You are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir" (Galatians 4:7). I can't imagine all that means, but I can't wait to find out! That's just the tip of the iceberg of biblical truth. Steep yourself in it. The more biblical truth shapes your worldview, the wider the floodgates of joy can open.

Meditate on who you are in Christ by personalizing Psalm 23, Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 40:31, Jeremiah 31:3, John 3:16, John 14:2-3, Romans 8:31-39, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Corinthians 9:8, Ephesians 3:20-21, Philippians 4:13, Philippians 4:19, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, Hebrews 4:15-16, and Hebrews 13:5.

Praise Your Way to Passion

Praising God for his character and promises strengthens your spiritual passion. Years ago, I was scheduled to lead my first worship service after a week of pastoral vacation. I was ten shades of blue-depressed. My spiritual passion didn't even register on the dip stick. I was feeling "vacation-hangover." I've noticed that the less I work, the less I want to work! My body was headed back to work, but my heart didn't want to go there. On the drive to the church, I began to sing some praise songs. The longer I sang, the better I felt. By the time I arrived, my spiritual passion was restored.

The church in Jerusalem grew explosively because of her passion for the Lord. These believers thought hard about and praised God daily. "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people" (Acts 2:26-27). The Scriptures repeatedly command us to praise God: "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him and bless his name" (Psalm 100:4). Praise primes the pump of joy.

Listen to and/or sing songs or hymns of praise to increase your spiritual passion.

Power-Up Your Passion

Passionate spirituality has a "whole church" dimension just as the excitement and enthusiasm of each individual and family at a high school football game combine to form an emotional crowd atmosphere that rises and falls during the game. The spiritual passion of individuals and small groups influences the atmosphere in larger gatherings.

The more time a couple spends talking together while they're dating, the more their passion for each other grows. Spending time with God in individual and small group prayer is an irrigation line of spiritual passion for the congregation. Since joy comes from God, you can't expect to experience it apart from communion with and dependence on him.

Organize your church to saturate each ministry and leader with prayer.

Flee Tradition-Driven Religion

Congregational sin blocks fellowship with God just as personal sin does. To the church at Laodicea, Jesus said, "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16). The opposite of a vital relationship with Christ is lukewarm, going through the motions, tradition-driven religion. Unhealthy churches are more satisfied with unfruitful ministries than healthy churches are with fruitful ones!

The rigidity of tradition frustrates the gentle leading of the Spirit. The church schedules the same activities at about the same time led by the same people each year because that's what they've always done. If you've never used Vacation Bible School as an evangelistic outreach, you're resistant to changes that would make it more effective in reaching out beyond your own walls. If you've always had revival services the third week of March, scheduling services for this

March is a knee-jerk reaction. The voice of tradition speaks so loudly that the still small voice of the Spirit of God is lost, like the song of a cardinal at an airport when a 747 is taking off.

In unhealthy churches, unchanging structures and programs take God's place. Everything is predictable. Pentecost surprises aren't welcome. God must play by the house rules or he isn't allowed to play at all.

Evaluate the fruit of every church program. Discontinue unfruitful ones or implement changes to make them more fruitful. Insist on programs that accomplish the church's mission and meet the needs of people today.

Quit Comparing

Spiritually proud persons and churches look down on "sinners" and on "saints" who attend churches unlike their own. One woman told me that a second woman from another church in town suggested the first woman's church was growing only because it was accepting the "gutter-trash" in town (that the second woman's church did not want!). The first woman said, "We'll take all the people you don't want!" Proud persons compare themselves with others and pat themselves on the back for their imagined superiority. They think they're the only ones who believe, teach, worship, and behave correctly. God doesn't get the glory in such churches, and he doesn't show up. He resists the proud (James 4:6). If God doesn't have perfect attendance at your worship services, it isn't *his* fault!

Refuse to compare your church's spirituality with other churches' or your personal spiritual maturity with others'.

Release the Steering Wheel

Sometimes church life is about "king of the mountain." Christians fight with one another and compete for power, control, and prestige. In one church, a former "church boss" who'd lost considerable power on the administrative council suggested a unanimous vote should be necessary for the council to take any actions. Perhaps it was just coincidental that he'd been the only dissenting vote on numerous motions passed by his council. Perhaps it wasn't. If you insist, God will let you "control" the church, but there's no joy or fruit in it.

Give Jesus the steering wheel of your life and church.

Break Down Barriers

Unforgiving persons erect chain-link fences topped with barbed wire between themselves and those who've offended them. The more fences in a congregation, the more tense and unpleasant the atmosphere is. Even visitors quickly detect it. God isn't pleased, and he isn't present in life-transforming ways. "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13). Where there's no forgiveness, there's no joy.

Take down fences you've erected between yourself and other believers by forgiving whatever grievances you have against them.

Pursue Holy Living

Churches can love and still maintain standards. Frequently, unrepentant church folks daily wade chest deep in the black, smelly swamp muck of sin and refuse to bathe. No one in their church seems to notice or care. Our culture applauds this “tolerant” attitude, but God doesn’t. It isn’t what our culture says, but what Jesus says that leads to joy. He said, “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:10-11).

Align your church using the plumb line of God’s standards not the world’s with regard to such issues as living together, abortion, homosexuality, qualifications for leaders, etc.

Channel Criticism Constructively

Unwarranted or unkind criticism kills the spiritual passion of pastors and church workers. Some church folks were spending Sunday dinner criticizing the ushers, choir, visitors, preacher, musicians, children, etc., until Bobby piped up, “It wasn’t a bad show for a dollar!” Phone conversations during the week stoke fires of criticism with gales of gossip. Criticism flows both ways. Some pastors carry grudges against their people. They came to the church to change the world, but the only thing they’re allowed to change is a light bulb (after going through appropriate channels for permission, of course!). It’s hard to be spiritually passionate when others are continually shooting critical arrows at you! The desire for appreciation or recognition motivates many who serve. Unwarranted or unkind criticism is one of the fastest ways to demoralize them. If encouragement increases spiritual energy and vitality in the congregation (and it does), unwarranted criticism decreases it.

Evaluate your motives before criticizing others. You might need to change. Share any critical words God gives you personally, privately, humbly, and with love. Sandwich them between two praises (before and after). Don’t talk about the issue with anyone who isn’t part of the problem or the solution.

Leaders Must Lead

Church members won’t have healthy spirituality if leaders don’t. A person with healthy spirituality is passionate about God, his word, his church, prayer, and lost people. TV dinners are convenient but usually not as nutritious as meals you make yourself. Reading daily devotionals only is like living on TV dinners. Get into God’s word daily, and allow him to speak directly to you. What you apply to yourself is your supply to feed others. Show them how. The role of leaders is “teaching them to obey everything I commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). You teach best by example.

Develop or refine your plans to expose yourself to God’s word and pray daily, to influence unbelievers, to minister to others, and to hold yourself accountable.

How to Increase Spiritual Passion

1. Practice Spiritual Disciplines

In 2006, I planted zucchini, broccoli, and tomato plants. I couldn't increase their size one millimeter by singing or preaching at them or yanking on them. God made them grow. I planted, watered, cultivated, weeded, and fertilized to provide an environment that was favorable for growth. Practicing spiritual disciplines provides an environment that's favorable for the growth of God's life within you.

a. Meditate—Much Scripture is like tough meat. You need to chew a long time to get maximum nutrition. Read it a word and phrase at a time. Repeat it over and over. Chewing on God's law brings delight (Psalm 1:2). Think about the true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8). Spend as much time thinking about Scripture as reading it. Let God's word, like gentle rain, sink deep into and soften the soil of your heart.

b. Pray—Prayer is talking with God about everything. He's your best friend and wants to talk to you too. Many days he'll let the Bible do the talking. Sometimes he speaks directly by persistent impressions. Hearing his voice shouldn't seem strange. You follow Jesus because you know his voice (John 10:4). Allow quiet time during prayer for God to speak to you. A balanced prayer life includes:

Praise: Praise is words or deeds that honor and exalt God for who he is and what he's done. Knowledge of both comes from the Bible. Exalt God for his glorious grace (Ephesians 1:6) and for Jesus, his all-sufficient sacrifice for sin. Those rescued naturally praise their rescuer (Hebrews 13:15).

Rely: The Greek word translated "faith" means dependence upon Jesus, his teachings, and his finished work on the cross, no matter what. Prayer without faith does not please God (Hebrews 11:6). If you believe, you'll receive whatever you ask for in prayer (assuming you ask for what's good for you!) (Matthew 21:22).

Admit: Acknowledge your sins. Confess how you've offended God (Leviticus 5:5). When you wrong another person, confess and make up for it (Numbers 5:6-7, Luke 19:8). When you confess your sins, God will forgive them and purify you (1 John 1:9).

Yield: The Lord is God. You're not. Surrender to him your will (Matthew 26:39), mind (Colossians 3:2), kingdom (Matthew 6:33), body (Romans 12:1), understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6), ways and thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9), and control of your life (Ephesians 5:18).

Express Thanks: Enter God's presence with thanksgiving (Psalms 100:4). Thank him for everything (Ephesians 5:20), whether circumstances are thumbs up or thumbs down (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Request: Ask God to supply your and others' needs. Make requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving for everyone (1 Timothy 2:1), especially for other believers (Ephesians 6:18).

c. Fast—Fasting is denying yourself food, hobbies, TV, computer games, etc., for a period of time to draw closer to the Lord. Check with your doctor before you deny yourself food.

A medical condition such as diabetes may mean you'll need to fast in other ways. Fasting provides opportunity to examine your spiritual life. It frees up time for God. Combined with prayer, it can help resolve conflict and restore unity. It can stir up the spiritual fire in your congregation. If your motives are pure, fasting gives your requests favor they don't have when you don't fast. Fasting can break the hold of the kingdom of darkness on unbelievers for whom you're praying. It's a practical way to practice the self-denial to which you're called.

d. Journal—Write down your thoughts during prayer and your time in the Scriptures. In the fall of 1981, I began recording applications and impressions from my Scripture reading. The take away value of my daily discipline increased significantly. Previously my goal had been to read through the Bible every year. I accomplished that numberless times with the emphasis on numb! Scripture often went through me like water through a garden hose without changing me. Journaling has helped me be more of a “tree Christian” where water that passes through the plant changes it.

e. Study—You can increase your love for God and others by studying the Bible and other sources of wisdom. Your mind needs to be renewed so you can see the world as God does (Romans 12:2). How does that happen? According to 1 Peter 2:2, crave pure spiritual milk (God's word). Let a hunger for God's word be your defining passion.

Renewing your mind isn't automatic or easy. It takes time and effort to think, feel, and act more like Jesus. God works in you to enable you to will and act according to his purposes (Philippians 2:13). Your part is to program your mind with and act upon one transforming God-truth after another after another. Jesus said that those who practice his teachings prove they're his disciples (John 8:31). It's a life-long journey.

Christian books are also a source of wisdom. Twelve books that have influenced me include:

Know Why You Believe by Paul Little; *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis; *Desiring God* by John Piper; *The Knowledge of the Holy* by A.W. Tozer; *Knowing God* by J. I. Packer; *More Than a Carpenter* by Josh McDowell; *The Church of Irresistible Influence* by Robert Lewis; *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers; *The Master Plan of Evangelism* by Robert Coleman; *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster; *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren; *The Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren. Reading Christian authors is a practical way to make your spirituality more passionate.

f. Simplify—Simplicity is committing to a lifestyle of seeking first God's kingdom and righteousness instead of accumulating material things. Do you really need an SUV? Will a cabin on the lake make your life more fulfilling? How much money should you spend on housing or entertainment? Do you need the latest computer or big screen television? How can you keep the tentacles of materialism from wrapping around your heart? I love the story about the folks whose car broke down, leading to their staying overnight with a poor farm couple. The couple instructed these folks not to hesitate to contact them if they needed anything during the night. They'd show them how to get along without it!

g. Get alone with God—Solitude is time alone to reflect on God and your life, world, and relationships. Unexamined lives are like neglected gardens overrun with weeds. Solitude enables you to separate weed from crop, urgent from essential, and temporal from eternal. Introverts can find solitude even in a crowd, whereas extroverts have to separate themselves bodily from others.

h. Submit—Submission is giving up the need to be in control. Your problem (the same as mine) is that you substitute yourself for God. Picture yourself reporting in at the official's table at a Chicago Bulls basketball game in the 1990s with ten seconds remaining in the last game of the NBA finals—"Selcher, in for Jordon!" How ridiculous! But even more ridiculous would be, "Selcher, in for God." Have you done that sort of thing? We all have. God's solution was to substitute himself for you so that you'll no longer substitute yourself for him. "And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Corinthians 5:15).

i. Obey—Obedience is doing what God wants immediately and wholeheartedly. Only those who do experience Jesus' joy: "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete" (John 15:10-11).

j. Serve—Service is gladly giving your treasures, talents, time, and energy to help others. Those who give of themselves, for example, in hurricane relief, usually become more passionate about their faith. You experience joy when you cheerfully and wholeheartedly do what God wants.

k. Share your faith—Sharing your faith with others increases your passion for the particular lost persons with whom you share and for your Lord.

l. Use your spiritual gifts—Using your spiritual gifts connects you with God's purpose for your life and his desire to bless others through you. Experiencing God's using you to touch others provides both a sense of fulfillment and deep joy.

m. Confess your sins—Confessing your sins and failures to one another helps you to experience God's forgiveness, to be transparent, and to recognize you're journeying with fellow strugglers. Everyone has problems!

n. Worship with others—Worshipping and celebrating together as a body gives God the praise he deserves and inspires thanksgiving and rejoicing on a larger scale than small group or private worship and celebration.

2. Saturate every ministry and leader in the church with prayer. Leaders pray for those for whom they're responsible, and everyone else prays for their leaders. Read and apply *The Prayer-Saturated Church* by Cheryl Sacks. Cover the worship service with prayer using worship intercessors and work at making the service more inspiring. Expect God to show up. Mix celebration and contemplation.

3. Encourage development of multiplying holistic small groups in the church. These are groups in which persons can be real with one another and be developed as disciples, leaders, gift-oriented ministers, and evangelists.
4. Encourage and give opportunities for individuals, small groups and the church during worship services to listen to and obey God's voice. Every message should include a specific challenge. Develop accountability systems to encourage people to respond to and follow through on these challenges.
5. Plan retreats at your church or at a retreat center that challenge people in their spiritual walk. Leaders should identify and deal with the specific underlying issues that limit the church's health. (See Chapter 12, Meeting 4 for details.)
6. Renew your thinking. Your thinking affects your feelings which in turn affect your actions and attitudes. Where are you looking for joy? God made you to find joy in him alone. Read *Desiring God* by John Piper.
7. Help individuals find a place of Christian service that fits their divine design (spiritual gifts, temperament, passion, and experiences). I recommend *The Three Colors of Ministry* by Christian A. Schwarz to help believers discover their gifts and *How to Use the Three Colors of Ministry in a Mentoring Relationship* by Christoph Schalk to empower gift counselors to help others find their place of ministry. (See Chapter 7 for details.)
8. Help individuals identify their evangelistic style and use it to reach out to those still outside the kingdom of God. Use *Becoming a Contagious Christian* by Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg as an evangelistic training resource.
9. Help individuals plug into compassion ministries (food bank, etc.) that meet the needs of others in the community. This develops a passion for people by getting closer to them.
10. Work on living out in the small groups in your church the "one anothers" of Scripture, e.g., love one another, forgive one another, encourage one another, etc.
11. Develop a mission and vision that will drive the church to accomplish God's will for it. Remove, one finger at a time, any chokehold that unfruitful tradition might have.

Be Kindling

If you're a leader, your spiritual passion affects the whole congregation. You can't fake it for long. People are watching and taking their cues from you. How you think and what you do daily might seem like a small, insignificant stone thrown into a lake, but the expanding circle it creates in your congregation and family is immense. Mothers and fathers whose spiritual life is limited to going to church-sponsored services or events a few hours a week without everyday passion for following the Lord are leading their children astray. Their watching children conclude that living for Jesus really isn't that important. If it were, mom and dad would be more excited about it. That attitude will probably be passed on to their children and grandchildren.

Leaders are kindling. If leaders are wet wood, don't expect any fire in the congregation or family. Fire within leaders starts other fires. Their apathy breeds more of the same. Their example defines how a Christ-follower lives. Duty-motivated leaders produce duty-driven followers, for whom the faith is a real yawn. Love-motivated leaders produce love-motivated followers. The diligence of leaders in feeding their own spiritual fire can impact their congregation and/or family for generations. Passionate leaders produce passionate followers. Too much is at stake for leaders just to go through the motions. Be kindling!

Spread the Fire

Give passionate believers opportunity to share why Jesus is so important to them and how they feed their spiritual fire. Give them a visible place in the life of the church to multiply the passion and highlight it as a value in the congregation.

Make into teachers or mentors passionate believers who have appropriate gifts. When their fire comes close to other believers over a period of months, it's likely to spread to them and from them to others.

Expect Opposition

Spiritual energy accompanies spiritual fire. Those who are most excited about Jesus and your church are your most effective workers. Their energy is one of your most precious resources. Guard it. Warn them that the greatest resistance and opposition they're likely to face will come from other members of the church. Those who are least excited about Jesus are often discouraged and discouraging. They try to squash the ideas of the passionate and might even question their sincerity. The challenge to passionate believers is to maintain their fire while some in the church are trying to stamp it out.

Warn the spiritually on fire to expect opposition from those in the congregation whose self-appointed ministry is putting out fires.

Feed the Fire

Unfortunately, most spiritual fires burn down. In April 2007, a huge fire blazed behind my house. I helped my brother burn diseased pine trees removed from his property. The flames shot twenty to twenty-five feet in the air and were so hot we had to stand at least thirty feet away. In less than an hour, the fire was considerably smaller. By the end of the day, only a few smoldering logs remained. It doesn't happen in a day, but the spiritual lives of many follow that same pattern. In the beginning, there's lots of fuel and giving the fire more seems unnecessary. Without feeding, physical and spiritual fires burn out.

Help white-hot passionate believers develop the habit of feeding their own soul to sustain the burning long-term.

Connect Spiritually Passionate Workers with Those Less Passionate

When passionate newcomers are coupled in church work with less passionate, but skilled laborers, both benefit. The enthusiasm and electricity of the passionate can recharge the batteries of long-term workers, and they in turn can teach the passionate the nuts and bolts of practical ministry.

Connect passionate newcomers with appropriate ministries and assign each one to work together with a veteran in that ministry for the first year.

Mobilize Passionate Believers

Sometimes passionate new believers are put on the shelf until they mature in the faith. That's a big mistake. One of the best places to use them is in evangelism. They might not be able to answer questions like why God allows evil and suffering, but they know what's happened to them and are anxious to share it.

Mobilize passionate new believers to do evangelism in their web of relationships.

Evaluate the Passion of Your Spirituality

To evaluate the health of your church's spirituality, complete the Healthy Spirituality Underlying Issues Inventory in Appendix A.

Chapter 5

Healthy Worship Service

Move Feelings to Get Action

You can tell how people are impacted during the worship service by watching their expressions and body language. Are there tears or yawns? How many are motivated and counting for the kingdom? How many are counting ceiling tiles? How many are hanging on every word? How many are playing “Hangman”? How many, with nodding heads, are agreeing with the pastor’s message? How many, with bobbing heads, are inspecting the inside of their eyelids? Are they saying “Amen” or inwardly criticizing what’s happening? How many are vigilantly attentive? How many are vigilantly checking their watches?

During one of my handful of interactive sermons, one man mumbled loudly enough for the deaf in the next county to hear, “That ain’t preachin!” I didn’t have to wonder whether he was inspired! When I did a dramatic portrayal of Lazarus returning from the dead to tell his story, people afterwards told me they felt like Lazarus had visited them.

The sights, sounds, smells and feelings of an inspiring worship service create long-term memories. An inspiring worship chorus becomes next week’s shower solo! The feeling of kneeling at the altar and being prayed for by the pastor will be remembered always. The service is over but its impact isn’t.

Evidences that worship services are inspiring include an attitude of anticipation by the congregation, a feeling of closeness to God and other worshippers, a joyous atmosphere, excitement, life-changing commitments, and strengthened faith, hope, and love. An inspiring worship service isn’t necessarily entertaining, but a boring worship service isn’t inspiring. The bottom line isn’t what the congregation feels, but what each person present does as a result of attending the service. When Robert Frost was inspired, he wrote a poem. When Rembrandt was inspired, he painted. When believers in Jesus Christ are inspired, they live loving, obedient, fruitful lives and seek to advance his kingdom.

What evidences of inspiring worship are obvious in your services? What evidences aren’t?

Set Worship Service Objectives

Select Your Ministry Focus Group

Your church doesn’t have enough time, money, expertise, or energy to meet everyone’s needs. You’ll be more effective if you focus. Don’t sit back passively waiting for people to come to your church. The shepherd doesn’t wait for the lost sheep to return to the fold but takes the initiative to search for it. Those who visit your church will come from every segment of the

population, but they won't stay if your church isn't organized to meet their needs. Reach out intentionally to the segment of the population to which you're best equipped to minister.

You're being wise by focusing on only one segment of the population. Emergency rooms focus on helping sick and injured people, not the healthy. Imagine an emergency room that tried to insure everyone in the county got at least eight hours of sleep each night. By moving into the realm of family physicians and away from what they do best, they'd become less effective. Your church needs to focus on what it does best. Other churches in the community can reach other segments of the population. Some persons who aren't in your focus group will still join your congregation, but most will come from your focus group. The key to attracting and holding new persons is structuring your ministry to meet their needs. You can't structure to meet everyone's needs because needs vary tremendously. Organizing your church primarily to meet the needs of senior citizens will make you unattractive to younger generations and vice-versa. Your strengths and ministry style should match and complement the needs and values of your focus group.

Your focus group might be one or more groups of persons in your community with special needs such as aging, compulsive behaviors, disabilities, loss/grief, health problems, marital/family problems, crisis pregnancy, divorce recovery, prisoners and their families, substance abuse, and abuse victims. The key to effective ministry is to decide whom you're going to reach and how you're going to reach them.

Listen

Begin by listening to the Lord. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6). When the leadership of your church senses the Lord's leading toward a specific focus group, talk and listen to persons in that group where they live. Identify and listen to others who are ministering to the same group and learn what's worked and what hasn't. If your outreach is saturated with prayer and meets the needs of your target group with a compassionate spirit, it'll almost certainly be successful. Listening to the Lord, your focus group and others who minister to them are the foundation stones on which that success is built.

Study Your Focus Group's Culture

Get to know the culture of the people to whom you'll minister by observing, listening, and questioning. What are their unique values, attitudes, beliefs, and customs? This knowledge will help you package the gospel to connect with their way of thinking, feeling, and doing. The more you know about your ministry focus group, the more effectively you'll be able to reach them. Use "Google" to search the internet for information.

Check www.census.gov for information about people in your area. Don't get carried away. You could spend days collecting information. To clarify what style of ministry and church is needed, check: Age and income ranges, marriage patterns (% single, married, divorced), number of children, ethnic group or national origin, educational levels, typical occupations, percent of spouses who work, housing patterns (% who own and % who rent), typical hobbies and leisure activities, type of music listened to, major social concerns, major felt needs, and basis

for social relationships (family, recreational activities). Pray for God to open your eyes, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to reveal the beginning shape of your ministry to your focus group. After you get started, continue to evaluate and make adjustments as you go.

Identify your focus group and at least three of its needs you can meet.

Choose Your Worship Style

Your worship style (traditional, contemporary, or blended) should please both your congregation and ministry target group. This is easiest to achieve if your focus group is very similar to your congregation. If the average age of your congregation is seventy-five, you're not in a good position to reach young married couples with families. You'd probably be more effective reaching other senior citizens.

In tradition-driven churches, "music wars" are usually symptoms of self-centered conflict between generations. The younger generation prefers contemporary music, the older generation, the grand old hymns of the faith (that were contemporary when first written!) accompanied by piano and/or organ. It's often a battle over two different generations' conclusions about "what's best for me." Neither is asking, "What worship style(s) would serve us best for the long haul for the health and growth of the church God has called us to be?"

Only consider music styles you can do well. If doing contemporary music in your setting means pushing buttons and using taped music, forget it. You're not ready to offer this style in your services until you can do it live and well.

Some churches offer multiple services with different styles to appeal to different music preferences, but most churches can't. Most small churches can't do more than one style well, and many struggle with even that. The quality of your music is more important than its style. Good music attracts. Bad music repels. I visited a church where the pastor led the singing in an extremely loud, very out of tune fashion. The instrumental music was also low quality. That's my only memory of the service! Churches with inspiring worship services aren't limited to any one style of music. Whatever the style, the common denominator is excellence. Few churches with poor quality music have inspiring worship services. Good music doesn't guarantee inspiring worship, but bad music almost single-handedly prevents it. Do whatever it takes to maximize the quality of your music and singing.

Identify your worship style(s) and why you selected it (them).

Determine How You'll Minister to Seekers

Seeker-focused churches design services to meet needs of persons without a church background. They aren't planned for believers. Such churches usually don't sing the Doxology after they collect tithes and offerings because seekers don't know it. They might not formally collect tithes and offerings at all to avoid the conclusion that the church is just after money. Typically, music and singing are more performed for the congregation than by it. Seeker-focused

sermons start from felt needs and lead to biblical principles. The motivation of seeker-focused churches is like Paul's who wrote,

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law ... so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law... so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some... (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

Most churches could hold seeker-focused services at least two or three times a year as special outreach events such as Friend Days or FRANTastic Days (Google them for more information). You can become a healthy church without seeker-focused services.

Seeker-sensitive services target believers but are also relevant to those without a church background. Evaluate every element of the service for seeker sensitivity. The sermons shouldn't assume knowledge of Bible stories, theology, or vocabulary and should apply to everyday life. Explain words like "justify" and "sanctify." When making announcements, worship leaders or pastors should refer to persons in the congregation by first and last name and have them identify themselves. Before tithes and offerings are collected, the pastor or worship leader might explain that this is for members only and guests aren't expected to give. Make new persons feel welcome, but don't introduce them publicly to the congregation or make them say anything.

Make necessary changes to connect with seekers more effectively.

Identify and Focus on Receptive Persons

There's a time for sowing and watering the seeds of loving words and deeds and a time for harvesting souls. People are most open to commit themselves to Christ and his church during seasons of uncertainty in life through the influence and witness of a trusted person. More than 80% of those who come to faith in Christ do so because of the influence of a friend or relative. That's the how. It happens when they're stressed by discontentment with life, national crisis, illness, injury, death of a loved one, divorce, birth of a child, or moving to a new area. Stressed people are more open to change than unstressed persons. One doesn't normally pick tomatoes in January in Pennsylvania. It isn't the harvest season. When the season arrives, tomatoes need to be picked. Be alert to identify those whose harvest season is signaled by new behavior patterns (such as beginning to attend church) and a new openness to spiritual things. First-time visitors to your church are often people under stress who are open to spiritual things. Also be sensitive to openness of fringe persons in the congregation during times of significant life-change.

Identify and focus on receptive persons.

Connect Need-Meeting Ministries and Worship

Your food bank or clothing ministry on Friday affects your worship service on Sunday. Ministries that meet felt needs of people make the gospel message believable. When people know you care, they're more likely to receive what you have to say. Love is better

communicated through service and fellowship than by preaching. Involve new believers in need-meeting ministry to aid their spiritual development. Train workers in these ministries to be inviters (to other church activities) and to share their faith when opportunities arise.

Use your need-meeting ministries more effectively to move persons toward attending your church. Begin additional need-meeting ministries.

Prepare for Worship

Expand Participation

Involving as many people in the worship service as you can increases ownership. The goal is to produce a high quality worship experience for the congregation while using as many persons as possible. Responsibilities of the team could include playing instruments, singing, introducing songs, creating slide presentations, reading Scripture, prayer, greeting, skits, testimonies, and receiving tithes and offering. Most churches can develop a worship team. The team's purpose is to usher the congregation into God's presence. The team's members will benefit from coaching and evaluation so they can feel positive about their contribution and continue to improve their skills.

Develop a plan to involve and train laypersons in aspects of worship service leadership.

Smooth Transitions

Eliminate dead spaces between service segments. The congregation shouldn't have to wait for people participating in the service to walk to the platform or front of the church. Double use your time when you can. For example, the choir or a soloist could sing while the ushers are receiving the tithes and offerings. People could pray silently during the prelude. People could sleep during the sermon. That thought isn't original. Someone in your church already thought of it!

Explain briefly why you're including the next element in the worship service while maintaining a focus on God. For example, before reading the Scriptures say, "Turn in your Bible to John 13. 1 Timothy 4:13 instructs us to 'give attention to the public reading of the Scripture,' so please listen as I read John 13 beginning with verse 31." Before singing, you could say, "Ephesians 5:19-20 tells us to 'speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.' Let's turn to page 40 and sing together 'Glory to His Name.'" If the next element in the service is another hymn, say something like, "Let's continue to praise God and give him glory by singing together number 232, 'Holy, Holy, Holy.'"

Remove dead spaces from your service. Make the transitions between parts of the service more seamless.

Make Visitors Feel Welcome (You have ten minutes!)

Visitors form their first impression of your church within ten minutes of their arrival. Many take only that long to decide whether they'll return. Make the first ten minutes especially warm, friendly, and inviting. If you regularly have visitors, consider parking lot or front door greeters who can greet the regulars but whose primary responsibility is to act as hosts or hostesses for visitors. They greet visitors with a smile, maintain eye contact, and offer a handshake. After introducing themselves, they can introduce the visitors to others in the church, show them where the restrooms are and tell them about childcare or activities for their children, if appropriate. They can give them a welcome packet and offer to answer their questions.

In 1977, my wife and I visited an Evangelical Covenant Church in Fargo, North Dakota. Within our first ten minutes there about ten persons greeted and warmly welcomed us. A middle-age couple greeted us and invited us to lunch at their house after the service! That really made a positive impression. We were looking for a church home. We attended that church regularly even though we didn't agree with some of the finer points of their doctrine. Their friendliness won us over.

Churched persons and previously unchurched persons visit your worship service for different reasons. Churched people visit because they've just moved to your area, they're dissatisfied with their present church or they're looking for a church that meets specific needs such as classes for their children, etc. Visitors who didn't previously attend church come because of the influence and invitation of a friend or relative, a search for community, a crisis situation, a feeling that something is missing, guilt, or the pastor's influence.

An impression of friendliness on the first visit is essential, or your church won't get a second chance. When visitors return week after week, you need to move beyond friendliness to friendship. Two key ways to assimilate new persons are to invite them into a small group where they can make friends and to find a meaningful task or role for them in the church.

Develop and execute a plan to make visitors feel welcome within the first ten minutes of their arrival.

Care for Children

In the thirty-three churches in the Eastern Regional Conference that have taken an NCD survey, the statement, "Optimal care is given to our children during worship services" correlates highly (.73) with the overall health score of the church and also with the statement, "In our worship service new faces are common" (.69). What does that mean? In general, the best childcare is provided by the healthiest churches and the worst by the least healthy churches. Let me make two more observations. If parents know their kids are safe and happy, the worship service is far more likely to be an inspiring experience for mom and dad. Second, optimal care for children during the worship service is an important issue for visitors to the church. If childcare isn't very good, new faces are uncommon and visitors with children don't return.

If you provide no child care and young children remain in the service, their sounds and movements distract parents and others in the congregation. Quality childcare in a well-equipped

nursery puts parents' minds at ease and enables them to focus on God during the worship service.

Some churches provide children's church or Sunday school during the worship service. Consistent, quality leadership of these programs meets children's needs and makes them want to attend regularly. When children are enthusiastic about children's church or their Sunday school class, parents will probably be enthusiastic about their church. Child-friendly churches are visitor-friendly churches.

Develop brief forms for parents with children to evaluate your nursery care, children's church, and/or Sunday school (whatever childcare options exist during the worship service). For example, an evaluation form for the nursery could ask parents to check one of five options for each statement on the evaluation form (very great extent, great extent, average, hardly, not at all). See the worship evaluation in Appendix D. Statements could include: The nursery is clean and attractive. I feel confident my children are well-cared for. I don't worry about the safety of my children while they're in the nursery. The nursery workers are kind and considerate.

Make sure the kids in your church are receiving quality care and instruction.

Use Worship Guides

Large churches are more likely to have worship teams than small churches are. In small churches and many larger ones, the pastor is it. Pastors aren't automatically effective worship leaders. I wasn't. I didn't know the best way to lead worship was for me to worship. Worship service details so cluttered my mind that I frequently wasn't sure whether we'd just finished singing verse two or three! In preparing for worship, the leader needs to be like Martha; during worship, like Mary.

The worship leader is more than a song leader with a good voice and knowledge of music. The leader's role is to bring the congregation into God's courts with thanksgiving and praise (Psalm 100:4). It isn't automatic or easy. He must move those who are easily distracted, self-absorbed, and complaining into prolonged, God-focused, grateful praise. Two persons can sit side by side singing "Holy, Holy, Holy." One praises God and the other listens to herself sing. The worship leader best leads the congregation into God's presence on Sunday by following a well-worn path he/she uses Monday through Saturday.

Leaders can enhance worship by connecting the pearls of hymns and spiritual songs with the string of their own spiritual passion, Bible verses, explanations of song backgrounds, testimonies, and highlighted parts of songs. The best worship leaders burn for God, and their sparks ignite the congregation. Leaders who oversee a worship team are responsible to stir up and develop the spiritual passion of those who compose it.

More and more churches are moving from a song leader to a worship team. These teams have the potential to make worship more inspiring. Musical ability is necessary, but not the sole qualification. The best team members are faithful, humble, way of life worshippers who can sing

or play an instrument well. During rehearsal they practice both music and worship. Use the team to help plan and evaluate worship services.

See Appendix D for “Worship Evaluation.”

Use the Arts in Worship

Creative, colorful banners can draw people into worship. Some churches use appropriate pictures as a backdrop to the words of songs they project on slides. Skits can reinforce the theme of the day more powerfully than words alone.

Develop a plan to make greater use of the arts in worship and appoint someone to oversee this aspect of ministry.

Preach to Change Lives

Prepare to Preach

Pastors, now hear this! If preaching is like a rocket, prayer is the first stage. Without it, your sermon won't get off the ground. Very probably you feel overwhelmed with ministry responsibilities, like a juggler with ten balls in the air. You're so busy you're tempted to neglect prayer, thinking your congregation won't know and won't complain as when you neglect hospital visitation. Don't give in to the temptation. You can't keep a weak prayer life secret. The spiritually discerning will know. You can make sermons witty and entertaining without prayer. You can't make them powerful and life-changing.

Did you hear about the pastor who was asked how long he spent preparing a certain sermon? He said, “Thirty years!” Your sermons flow out of your everyday relationships with your God, family, congregation, community, and world. Healthy relationships spawn the best sermons. Know God. Know yourself. Know your congregation. Know life. The more diligently you pursue these four life-long pursuits, the better your sermons will meet the needs of the congregation. Life is about relationships—with God, neighbors, and other believers.

Read the Bible to feed yourself spiritually. Beware of filleting fish for others to eat, but never eating it yourself. It's hypocritical to challenge others to read the Bible for spiritual nourishment while you only read it to prepare sermons or lessons. The Bible, more than any other book, will teach you about the world. The Bible says people are basically sinful; the world says they're basically good. The Bible says the greatest are those who serve the most people. The world says the greatest are those with the most servants. To rightly divide the word of truth you need God's perspective on life. It's also helpful to read books, newspapers and magazines to stay informed about world events. Part of your job is to instruct the congregation how to live as a Christian in today's world.

Share your personal plan to feed yourself spiritually and to stay informed about current events.

Be Your Best Self

Spiritual gifts, personality, and spiritual passion should determine preaching style. The challenge is to be your best self, not to imitate rich and famous preachers whom your board will never allow you to become! You can learn something from them, but God called you, not them, to preach at your church. Using a “stained-glass” preaching voice that mysteriously takes over your body twenty-five minutes or so each week says the normal speaking voice God gave you isn’t spiritual enough! It’s true that you’ll have to adjust your style somewhat between speaking to a group of twelve and a group of two hundred, with much bigger gestures for the larger group. Nevertheless, be yourself, your best self.

Define the next step you should take to become your best self as a preacher.

Preach for Life Change

Sermons that apply timeless biblical principles change lives. Your knowledge of Greek or Hebrew can be helpful but shouldn’t be the focus of your sermon. Taking words apart doesn’t put lives together. Understanding the meaning is just a preliminary step in applying it to life. It’s good to wear your Fruit of the Loom, but don’t let it show!

Preaching shapes the way people think about God, themselves, others and their world, which affects how they feel and what they do. The goal of preaching is to stir the congregation to love God with all their being, their neighbors as themselves, and other believers as Jesus loves them. This love is the motivation for obedience, and obedience is the proof of love (John 14:21). Faith drives both love and obedience because without faith it’s impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Preaching is about pointing persons to and glorifying God, not the preacher. People can’t think the preacher is clever and God is wonderful at the same time! Make your sermons prayer-backed, clear, Bible-based and applicable to life.

The most effective preaching is application-oriented. Good preaching or teaching should be at least 50% application. People who want to please God will seldom complain that the sermons are too applicable to life! Make the applications the main points. For example, in a sermon titled “Growing in Love,” my five main points are: Fill up with God’s love; open up yourself to others; lift up others; break down barriers; and reach out to those who don’t know Jesus. Each main point is a practical way to demonstrate love.

The best sermons change lives. Set up ways for people to reflect on and respond to your messages. Some churches have small groups which react to and discuss the pastor’s sermon. Plan practical action steps persons can take to respond to the sermon. For example, if the sermon is “Growing in Love,” challenge members to sign up to join a small group where that love can be lived out and experienced.

Effective preachers tell great stories just as Jesus did. The best stories come out of their own life experiences. Stories make main points memorable. They also make sidetracks and rabbit trails memorable. Be careful how you use them. Stories that aren’t relevant to your main point will be remembered, but your point won’t. Use stories to illustrate why the congregation should live God’s way at home, at work, during recreation, etc., and the consequences of living

otherwise. Use them to illustrate main points and to apply God's word to life. Stories should clarify truth without competing with it for the spotlight.

Share your strategy to make your preaching/teaching more focused on life application.

Live It

God rarely speaks powerfully through “journalist” preachers who communicate truths they've not experienced. If a pastor tells his congregation to love and forgive those who've hurt them without doing so himself, the message will be dead on arrival. A pastor's son made a serious mistake that publicly embarrassed the pastor. The pastor told him he was going to do to him just what God told him to do. The boy expected a beating. Instead the pastor hugged him and told him he forgave him, but that would not erase the consequences of his behavior. That pastor talked about forgiving others, and the congregation listened. God's life was flowing through him. There will be times when pastors have to preach truth they've never experienced. At that point they need to say honestly, “I've never done this myself, but this is what God says. How can we do it?”

In thirty-three churches in the Eastern Regional Conference that have taken an NCD survey, how people rate their preacher's sermons is closely related to their opinion of his spiritual health. Congregations who don't think their pastor is a good spiritual example don't find the sermons very interesting or relevant. The preacher's spiritual example and preaching effectiveness are connected at the hip.

Work hard at practicing what you preach.

Use Varied Methods to Teach Truth

Do your sermons make your people significantly more passionate 24/7 believers? You certainly hope so, right? The disappointing truth is that you can't rely on preaching alone to move your church to greater health. Preaching for life-change impacts the congregation positively in many areas, but not all. You need other tools as well, such as mentoring and small group discipleship.

In ERC churches, there's no statistically significant relationship between how need-oriented the sermons are and how much members read the Bible on their own, give as a percentage of their income, experience transforming faith in their personal lives or treat God's word as an authority in their lives. It's easier to influence “we” behavior (what people do in their church life) through sermons than “me” behavior (what people do in their personal lives). On the other hand, there's a very significant relationship between need-oriented sermons and motivation to do church work, enthusiasm about the church, belief that God will work more powerfully in the future in the church, and loving and firm correction of those who are obviously in the wrong. Preaching is an important part of the church health package, but many other parts are required to change lives. Don't put all your eggs in the preaching basket.

Make plans to use mentoring and small group discipleship to supplement the communication of the truth through preaching.

Use the Worship Service's Influence Wisely

Everything done or said in the worship service has the potential to affect every ministry in the church. The effects of some elements are easier to measure than others. Let's consider the influences of relevant preaching and music in the service. Based on statistical analysis of ERC data, relevant preaching correlates closely with the congregation's having a vision, their enthusiasm and motivation to work, their feeling of being supported in their ministry, their sense of how much God uses their work to build the church, their knowledge about the plan for church growth and which goals the church will pursue in the coming years, their belief the activities of the church are characterized by successful planning and organization, their feeling the worship service is an inspiring experience and has a positive influence, their interest during the worship service, their enjoyment of bringing visitors and the unchurched to the service, their perception of how creative the evangelistic activities are and how frequently evangelism is discussed, their freedom to talk with others about feelings and problems, new people finding friends in the church quickly, how many new faces there are in worship, how much joy and laughter there is in the church, and an atmosphere where praise and compliments are common. Relevant preaching has a *huge* effect!

Music that helps believers worship positively influences how inspiring and influential the worship service is perceived to be and how effectively the sermon speaks to life needs. Worshipful music creates an atmosphere where God can work.

Even relevant preaching in ERC churches doesn't greatly affect the quality of small group life. That can change. There's great potential to improve health by using parts of the worship service to point people toward small group involvement and to celebrate small group victories.

Use your worship service intentionally to enhance the health of your small groups.

Multiply Worship Facilitators

Once your worship service is inspiring, the challenge is to make it self-sustaining. The variables are God, the people who have some part in the service, and your system to harness their gifts. God remains the same, but changes in the people and your system can make worship more or less inspiring. Since people move, get sick, become injured, change churches, or die, a priority needs to be multiplying effective worship team members. In the human body, millions of cells die every second, but as long as they're replaced, the body remains healthy. Your bone marrow produces billions of new red blood cells every day. Diligently multiply worship support team members (such as those who greet, pray during the service, provide spiritual counsel, etc.). Greeters train other greeters, people who pray during the service train others to pray, etc. This same principle applies to those who are on the worship team and to the pastor. The pastor can train the elders and others to preach in an interesting, relevant fashion. When the pastor is on vacation or away from the pulpit, the inspiration level of the service doesn't have to suffer. The

pastor can also train those in the church who are called into pastoral ministry to make them effective preachers wherever the Lord's leads them.

Design ways to make inspiring worship self-sustaining.

Tap Worship Service Energy

Inspiring worship services motivate people to channel their energy into church work and thereby influence every ministry in the church. It's where workers recharge their "batteries." Statistical analysis of ERC data reveals that interesting sermons and services, services with a positive influence, relevant preaching, excellent care for children, bringing visitors, and visitors being common are all significantly correlated with the congregation's motivation to do church work. The rising tide of inspiring worship lifts many ministry boats.

Tap the energy inspiring worship generates by challenging your people to put their faith to work.

Work Together to Enhance Worship

When milk-fat, milk-solids, sweeteners, stabilizers, water, and air are mixed together in the right proportions and frozen, the result is inspiring ice cream! When those who are gifted to be worship intercessors, parking lot greeters, ushers, sound people, worship leaders, instrumentalists, vocalists, pray-ers, actors and actresses, preachers, and others are mixed together in the right proportions, the result is inspiring worship. God uses the gifts and work of many persons to make worship more than the sum of its parts. Each person on the worship team should know the team's mission and his/her part in achieving it.

Adopt a team approach to worship.

Evaluate How Healthy Your Worship Service Is

To evaluate the health of your church's worship service, complete the Healthy Worship Underlying Issues Inventory in Appendix A.

Chapter 6

Healthy Evangelism

Emphasize Outreach in Your Mission Statement

The mission of every church is to reproduce Christ-like believers. Believers are intended to reproduce after their kind. Only Christ-like believers can reproduce Christ-like believers. Champion race horses, not plow horses, reproduce other champion race horses. A disciple isn't just someone who knows about Christ, but someone seeking to become like him. Your mission is to reproduce Christ-like believers.

Clearly, briefly, and simply write your mission statement to emphasize outreach. Communicate it in multiple ways using sermons, Sunday school lessons, new members' classes, bookmarks, signs, posters, bulletins, newsletters, banners, etc.

Model Outreach

Most pastors and church leaders don't have the gift of evangelism. Among the thirty-four pastors whose churches have taken NCD surveys in the Eastern Regional Conference, only six (18%) claim the gift. No more than 10% of believers possess the spiritual gift of evangelism according to C. Peter Wagner (quoted by Christian Schwarz in *Natural Church Development*, p. 35). A 2001 study by George Barna revealed that 8% of senior pastors in the USA claimed to have the gift. That doesn't mean pastors and believers without the gift of evangelism can ignore the evangelistic task. They can't.

Like Timothy, we're all commanded to do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5), which means often working outside our comfort zone. Pastors and laity alike often spend most of their time with other believers with few close relationships with and little influence in the lives of pre-Christians. The evangelistic lifestyle of leaders sets an example for the congregation. Many in the congregation will eventually value what you do. Your sharing about reaching out to your neighbors motivates them to do the same to their neighbors. Sharing your faith strengthens your passion for lost people and puts you in a position to experience God's enabling grace on the front lines of ministry.

Put pictures of those who are serving others on a bulletin board, in computer slide presentations, or on a link in your church website. You could call it, "Faith Works."

Give persons doing outreach three minutes during worship services to explain how they're meeting needs and sharing Jesus using the gifts and passions God has given. This could be called the Faith Works Report.

Expand Evangelistic Responsibility

Many congregations view the pastor as the hired evangelistic gun. It's his responsibility to lead people to Christ because he alone (it's assumed) can do it correctly. That approach greatly limits spiritual fruit. It's like designating a single branch of a tree to bear apples instead of the whole tree. The same could be said of churches that place evangelistic responsibility on an evangelism committee. Bearing fruit is the responsibility of every branch. When I was involved in Campus Crusade for Christ at Penn State University in the mid-1970s, students didn't depend on CCC staff to share the gospel with others. The combined efforts of hundreds of CCC students led more fellow students to faith in Christ than did the CCC staff. God's design for success in the plant and animal kingdoms is multiplying reproducing units. Last year you had six thistles in your yard. This year you have sixty-three with the ability to produce ten times as many seeds as last year. The church's challenge is to multiply the number of persons who are sowing, watering, and harvesting. If they increase ten-fold, you've the potential for ten times the number of conversions.

Develop a strategy to multiply evangelists in your congregation beyond the pastor or a small committee.

Church evangelism is greatly hindered when it consists only of weekly "home games." We expect others to come to our field (the bethel) during our worship service or some special service. We share the gospel with them on our own turf. Many of these "visitors" feel uneasy and uncomfortable in unfamiliar territory. Jesus did most of his ministry away from the synagogue and temple. He's the Word made flesh sent from heaven to explain God by word and deed in a way people can understand. He came to us (John 1:11) before he invited us to come to him (Matthew 11:28-30). He's still the Word made flesh, but his flesh on earth is now the body of Christ of which every believer is a part. We must go to others and meet their needs before we can expect them to come to Jesus.

Evaluate how you can add more "away games" to your outreach schedule.

Treat Evangelism as a Process

Evangelism, like gardening, consists of sowing, watering, cultivating, fertilizing, and harvesting with lots of waiting interspersed. It takes time for individuals to understand and respond to the gospel. Some take more time than others. I heard the gospel more than 1000 times over fifteen years before really making a commitment to Christ. When it comes to responding to the gospel, people are like different species of plants. Spinach can be harvested forty-five days after planting. Tomatoes mature in sixty-five to eighty days. Sweet corn takes seventy-five to ninety days. Banana and papaya trees produce a year after they're planted. Guava takes two to three years. Avocados don't bear fruit for seven to ten years.

In informal surveys in Eastern Regional Conference churches, I asked "How many of you received Christ as Lord and Savior the very first time you heard the gospel?" Of about 1,500 persons polled, only two raised a hand! That shouldn't surprise you. You probably didn't receive Christ the first time you heard the gospel either. Evangelism is a process, not a gospel sharing event. Sowing, watering, weeding, cultivating, and fertilizing precede harvesting. Most of the work of evangelism isn't done by those who lead people to Christ, but by friends and relatives who prepare the way. The more persons in your church involved in sowing, watering, weeding,

cultivating, and fertilizing the greater the harvest is likely to be. Praying for the salvation of your pre-Christian friends and relatives and demonstrating caring by meeting their needs is a vital part of the evangelistic process.

Empower and challenge new converts to share with their friends, relatives, and associates how Christ is making a difference in their lives. Help all believers in your church understand that God uses a sequence of events and experiences to bring persons to himself. These God-directed influences and influencers are like links of a chain. You probably won't be the first link (the first exposure someone has to the gospel) or the last link (the one who leads them to a personal relationship with Jesus), but one of the middle links. Moving others even one step closer to a commitment to Christ through sharing a testimony or performing a loving action is very significant.

Irresistible Evangelism by Steve Sjogren, Dave Ping, and Doug Pollock, published by Group in 2004 portrays evangelism as a process. The book compares evangelism to playing golf. The club you use depends on how close the ball is to the hole (a person's closeness to receiving Christ). Sharing how to become a Christian is like a putter to move those to Christ who are already close to a commitment. If someone denies God's existence, sharing how to become a Christian isn't the right tool. You don't use a putter to tee off! Where pre-Christians are with respect to Christ determines whether evangelism takes the form of active kindness (for those farthest away), active friendship, active wondering, or sharing the gospel (for those closest to Christ).

Develop Evangelistic Strategies

Help Believers Build Relationships with Pre-Christian Friends and Relatives

You might wonder how you can help your people build relationships with people they already know who need to know Jesus. One way is to consider whether your church's values and structures support or compete with such relationship building. The church's goal is to make more and better disciples who do the same. Every service, meeting and activity should contribute to that goal or be eliminated. I know that isn't how most churches think. We'll deal with this area of church life extensively when we consider Healthy Structures in Chapter 8. One reason the garden of the church isn't more fruitful is the number of weeds (fruitless meetings, activities etc.) that bleed time, energy, and finances from God's people without contributing to making more and better disciples.

If the church values building redemptive relationships, leaders must model it, share testimonies about their experiences and develop structures in the church that support members' efforts to build relationships. For example, a bowling outing for members and their pre-Christian contacts on a Wednesday night might be more fruitful than holding a Bible study that night. The bowling outing exposes the pre-Christians to the light of the friend or relative who invited them as well as the lights of other believers. Before pre-Christians can trust Christ they have to trust those who represent him and tell them about him. If the Bible study isn't bringing life change and fulfilling the church's mission and vision in a specific and intentional way, it's like volunteer corn in a soybean field. The corn is edible, but in the soybean field, where it isn't supposed to be, it's a weed. A good thing (Bible study) can be the enemy of a better thing (building relationships

to make more and better disciples), especially in churches that are weak in outreach. Most Christians already know way more than they're practicing. The mission of the church is better accomplished by "Here's how to" than another load of "You ought to."

Model redemptive relationship building and develop structures in the church that support members' efforts to build relationships.

Help Believers Tell Their Story

Perhaps you think you don't have much of a spiritual story to tell. You weren't that bad before you received Christ. You're not that good now, and it's been a struggle! Compared to those who can recount deliverance from alcoholism, drug abuse, prostitution, gambling, etc., your spiritual experience seems as unexciting as watching water drip from a leaky faucet. Unlike Saul of Tarsus, you've not seen the risen Christ. You've not heard God speak in an audible voice or seen even a five-second mini-vision in black and white. You're simply a "trust and obey" believer and often feel like a failure in even those two basics.

Many of us have forgotten or never experienced the relentless single-file march of an army of unsatisfying days lived out under sin's merciless control. Nothing changes but the date. No peace. No purpose. No hope. No fulfillment in this world, and no claim to the next. Life is like a daily chase after the butterfly of good feelings. Although it's occasionally captured, it always escapes through a hole in the net. Tomorrow we must pursue it again. Butterfly chasers aren't happy with life, but don't realize Christ and his church promise the purpose they've longed for. Believing our story isn't important adds to the problem.

We all benefit from thinking long and hard about how God has been at work in our lives. We aren't yet what we want to be, and our failures, like facial blemishes, are all too familiar. Nevertheless, we've probably moved farther from the spiritual starting line than we realize. Writing our personal spiritual story prepares us to share it more clearly and often.

When we were living for ourselves, we were blind to most of our faults. Now, like kittens with our eyes newly open, we see ourselves more clearly, and that alone is significant progress. God has chosen to store his living water in imperfect vessels still under construction. We're cracked and we leak, but God can still pour his living water through us to satisfy the spiritually thirsty. We're a work in progress, and Jesus gets all the credit for any improvement. Our role isn't to pretend we possess sinless perfection but to be transparent.

Your story will connect with people who are like you. Persons who "aren't that bad now," and, have never battled alcoholism, can relate to how Christ has worked in a "not so bad life" better than how he's worked in the life of a converted alcoholic.

Your story can help open the eyes of not-yet-believers, but first you have to write it. Before you can do that, you need to pray and reflect on how God has been at work in your life. The whole process will probably take several hours, but the blessings that can result are beyond calculation. Try to organize your thoughts around a single theme, such as how your purpose or values have changed.

To communicate your story effectively, organize it into three sections:

- 1) Tell what your life was like before knowing Jesus personally.
- 2) Explain how you came to know Christ clearly enough that others will know how to receive him too.
- 3) Share how receiving Christ has changed how you relate to God, others, and yourself.

My testimony illustrates how you might organize your own. When you read it, look for the dominant theme.

“Spiritual things weren’t always important to me. I was taken to church three times a week for twelve years, but other things were more important. Outside the church building, I hardly ever thought about God, rarely prayed voluntarily, and never read the Bible on my own. My purpose was to excel in sports and my studies to win the love and acceptance of others. I set goals in both areas and sacrificed a lot to attain them. I discovered that achieving them never brought lasting satisfaction. The thought of dying scared me, and a cloud of guilt hung over me. I believed in heaven but had no assurance I’d go there when I died.

“In my church, I often heard that Jesus had died on a cross to pay the penalty for my moral and spiritual imperfections. I knew I wasn’t perfect, but I didn’t understand how Jesus’ death solved the problem. I pictured it as a down payment on my passage to heaven. I thought I had to make regular payments by the good things I did.

“During the fall of 1968, as a result of hearing 1 John 5:11-12 quoted by a fellow who was sharing the gospel with me, I understood I didn’t have to make any payments at all. Jesus had paid the penalty for my moral imperfections in full. Those verses say: ‘And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.’ It was actually quoted to me from the King James Version. That evening in my dorm room, I trusted in Jesus’ sacrifice alone to give me right standing with God and invited him into my life. That evening was a turning point. Because God loved and accepted me as I was, I wanted to do what pleased him. Little by little, love began to displace fear as a dominant motivator in my spiritual life.

“My fear of death greatly diminished. God lifted the weight of guilt for my moral failures when I trusted Jesus’ death as payment in full. I had assurance that I’d go to heaven because I knew I could trust Jesus to keep his promise to take me there.

“The new life I received wouldn’t allow me to relate to God or others in the same old ways. I remember feeling a twinge of conscience after talking in a negative way about people who weren’t present—something I’d done repeatedly for years without thinking twice about it. God convicted me that my language needed some attention. My words (&% @#!) were a symptom of the anger and desire for control that swirled within me. Gradually I saw improvement. Little by little, God’s love for and acceptance of me freed me to love and accept others. I gradually developed a strong desire to serve others that I didn’t have before the fall of

1968. My goal became to know Jesus better and to help others know him too. Working toward that goal brought a measure of fulfillment I'd never known when I was doing my own thing."

The central theme of my testimony is how my life's purpose and values changed through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Your testimony is your spiritual autobiography, as unique as your fingerprints. To share it with others effectively, you should memorize the major points.

Your story can impact others whose hearts the Holy Spirit has prepared. Not only will it influence them, but sharing it will also stoke your own spiritual fires by reminding you anew how much Christ has done for you.

Mobilize believers in your church to think about, organize, and write their stories.

Help Believers Tell God's Story

Timing is critical to fishing and evangelistic effectiveness. Fish bite better during certain times and days than others. During times of stress, great problems, and upheaval, persons are more receptive to the gospel than when everything is going smoothly.

Many don't fish nearly as often as they'd like because of the difficult transition from the chores to the shores—they just don't get around to it. We don't evangelize as much as we'd like because it's hard to move from small talk to God-talk.

Certain questions can help you bridge the conversation from the weather, sports, etc., to spiritual things. They include:

1. Especially when you know someone is going through a tough time, ask, "Do you feel a need to be closer to God?" If the answer is "Yes," say, "Let me show you how you can be," and then share the gospel.
2. "Why do people feel so empty, even when they have so many things?" Here's an opportunity to tell how Jesus has brought meaning to your life and filled up the empty spot.
3. "Do you think there's an overall purpose and meaning in life? What do you think it is?" Here's another opportunity to share your personal testimony!
4. If they attend a church service with you or other kind of outreach event, ask, "What did you think of the message?" After their response, ask, "Have you made the wonderful discovery of knowing Christ personally?" If the answer isn't, "Yes," ask, "Would you like to?" If the response is positive, share *Connecting with God* (See Appendix C).
5. Talk about some need that's become obvious such as a lack of purpose, fear, or loneliness and share how Christ has met that need in your life.

You can explain the essence of the gospel very briefly as two things to know and two things to do. The first thing we need to know is that we're sinners because we can't measure up to the moral standard Jesus set when he walked on earth. The second is that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and rose from the grave on the third day, showing God was satisfied with that payment. The first thing to do is turn from our own self-centered path in life to go God's way. The second is to invite Jesus Christ into our life to be our personal Forgiver and Leader. Ask, "Does that make sense?" If yes, then ask, "Have you ever received God's offer of forgiveness by inviting Jesus Christ into your life?" If the answer is no, ask, "Would you like to do that right now?"

When you're sharing the gospel, just read "Connecting with God" to the individual. See Appendix C.

Include an Evangelistic Component in Every Ministry

Instead of the pastor or a few individuals being responsible for evangelism, make it a component of every ministry—women's ministry, men's ministry, youth, Sunday school, home Bible studies, seniors' ministry, etc. In 2005 I planted about a dozen periwinkle plants in a bare spot near the house. In 2006 most of them were reproducing and sending out runners. If only one of the twelve had the responsibility to reproduce, the bare space would take much longer to cover with periwinkle. The more doors you supply into church life (through need-meeting ministries), the more persons you'll incorporate and the more likely they'll stay.

Very often, people whom the pastor brings into the church (through meeting some need) are committed to him but not to the church. When he leaves the church, so do they. People who come to Christ and the church through the witness of laypersons are much more likely to stay after the pastor leaves.

Identify ministry doors through which new persons have entered your church in the last year. Open them even wider. Within the next year, install an outreach component in at least two ministries that don't have one yet.

Help Believers Be the Church

Churches are like high school basketball games where the few on the court are badly in need of rest, and the many in the stands are badly in need of exercise. In most churches, less than twenty percent of the congregation (those with their tongues hanging out!) does eighty percent of the work. About thirty to forty percent is unemployed in ministry but would participate if challenged personally and equipped to do something they'd enjoy that makes a difference. About fifty percent won't do anything but sit and appear to listen. The thirty to forty percent, if mobilized, could more than double the laborers in the harvest fields. Remind the congregation that Christians are called to *be* the church and not just go to church. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10).

Mobilize unemployed believers in appropriate ministries that have an evangelistic component.

Meet the Needs of Your Members

The enthusiasm of your people is directly proportional to your church's ability to meet their needs. Both enthusiasm among your key people and your church's ability to meet their needs are extremely highly correlated with church health in ERC churches. Enthusiastic and unenthusiastic members talk about your church. The first group invites others to come; the second doesn't. The first is the best possible advertisement for your church; the second is the worst. The level of satisfaction of those already attending your church greatly influences its attractiveness to new people. Make meeting your members' needs a high priority. Perhaps their greatest need is to be loved and equipped to love others.

Take an enthusiasm survey among a random sample of thirty of your people at least twice a year. Average the responses by substituting the number in parenthesis for each checked response. The goal is for your church to average 0.7-0.9 or less. The least healthy ERC churches average 1.4-1.8. The response to this statement gives a very accurate indication of the overall health of your church.

Check the statement that best describes your opinion: "I am enthusiastic about my church."

___ to a very great extent (0)

___ to a great extent (1)

___ to an average extent (2)

___ hardly at all (3)

___ not at all (4).

What do you like best about the church?

What would you most like to change?

Major on Leadership

Those elected to church leadership positions often spend most of their time managing church buildings and tradition-driven programs instead of leading. That approach almost guarantees an inward-looking, unhealthy, declining church. Effective evangelistic strategies don't appear in your church's mailbox fully formed and ready to go. Leaders must develop them. Ideally, leaders should chart the strategy for their own ministry.

The persons responsible to develop evangelistic strategies in our church are:

Do Pre-Evangelism

Saturate Evangelism with Prayer

Prayer isn't optional. Evangelistic fruit depends on God's power. No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). Winning souls depends on your personal prayer life and the prayer ministries of your church. More people praying for laborers for the harvest and for the lost bring more evangelistic fruit (Matthew 9:38).

Repeatedly, pastors, staff, and laypersons in effective evangelistic churches told Dr. Thom Rainer that their churches prayed for lost people by name. Whether in small groups of laypersons, the pastor and his staff, or some other way, these churches prayed specifically for lost persons. Churches that pray specifically for the lost are seldom if ever declining (*Effective Evangelistic Churches*, Broadman & Holman Publishers).

Immediately after we received Christ, we oozed compassion for the lost and couldn't stop talking about Jesus. Over time that compassion leaked away. Our eyes turned inward and, one cell at a time, little by little, our heart hardened. We say we believe in hell, but live as if we don't. We hardly give the lost a thought. We claim to love our neighbors, but often walk around them as the priest and the temple helper did (Luke 10:25-37). Praying for the lost softens our heart and the hearts of those for whom we pray. Praying for the lost can transform an inward-looking church into an outward-looking one.

To pray more effectively for the lost:

1. Pray for those you know who don't attend church, who are disinterested in a personal relationship with Christ, or whose salvation you're not sure about. Show them God's love in practical ways.
2. Believe God wants to save the person because he's laying her on your heart (2 Peter 3:9).
3. Ask God to prepare the person to understand and respond to the gospel and become good spiritual soil that produces a huge crop.
4. Pray the person won't be satisfied with anything less than a relationship with God.
5. Pray the Holy Spirit will draw the person to Jesus.
6. Pray the Holy Spirit will convict the person of sin and the need of a Savior.
7. Pray for an understanding that good works can't earn God's favor.
8. Pray for answers to the questions that are blocking a relationship with God.
9. Ask for people to communicate the gospel to the person through word and deed.
10. Ask for God's power to live a Christ-filled life before the person.
11. Pray for boldness to speak about Christ, sensitivity to keep quiet when appropriate, and wisdom to know the difference.
12. Pray for the unsaved friends, relatives, and neighbors of those in your small group by first name at each small group meeting.
13. During the pastoral prayer in the worship service, allow thirty seconds of silence for people to pray for the salvation of those they know who aren't yet believers in Jesus Christ.
14. Ask persons to write at least three names of their lost friends, relatives, and associates on a card. Give the card to the prayer coordinator who compiles the names and organizes prayer for these persons.
15. Before council or commission meetings, schedule times of group prayer for the spiritual needs of people.
16. The pastor or pastoral staff sets the pace by praying for the lost on a regular basis.

17. For more ideas, consult *The Prayer-Saturated Church* by Cheryl Sacks and/or *The Praying Church Sourcebook* by Alvin J. VanderGriend with Edith Bajema.

Define your strategy to saturate your evangelistic outreach with prayer.

Welcome Newcomers

Use ushers/greeters to welcome newcomers. Greet and express welcome to newcomers when they're still in the parking lot. Make newcomers with kids aware of children's care and activities. Use terms in your service that a person new to church life can understand. Organize and set up a newcomers/information table. Offer refreshments. Give newcomers information about your church to take home. Organize your small groups, Sunday school classes, and men's/women's ministries to reach out to newcomers.

Meet Needs

Ministries that reach out to pre-Christians include interest groups that center on sports or hobbies, ministries that meet specific needs (e.g., parenting skills, managing finances, marriage enrichment, etc.), outreaches to hurting people that help them find wholeness (those touched by death, divorce, etc.), and ministries that help those with addictions.

The Southern Baptists have developed a process to assess community needs and discover ministry evangelism possibilities in the community ([www. namb.net](http://www.namb.net)). They interview agencies or individuals who are already meeting community needs. The goal is to learn about community services, assess community problems and unmet needs, establish relationships with the community, and determine how Christians and churches can become involved in ministry. Consider interviewing those who serve in senior adult centers, Head Start programs, senior adult day-care centers, police precincts, sheriff departments, fire departments, Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, human services departments, public health departments, mental health departments, counseling services, alcohol and drug rehabilitation, food banks, food pantries/soup kitchens, shelters, vocational rehabilitation services, school counselors, chaplains, jail and prison administrators, housing project managers/resident council presidents, multi-housing community managers, city mayors/managers, city council/county commission members, hospital administrators/chaplains, and military base commanders/chaplains. Not all these agencies will be available in your area. Check your telephone directory for a list of local helping agencies.

Organize a community assessment task force to determine what agencies to survey and when the church will do the survey. The task force recruits volunteers equal to the number of agencies to visit, so twenty agencies would need twenty volunteers. They all make their visits the same day. Each team of two volunteers visits two agencies that should be located close together. The first appointment is at 10:00 a.m. and the second is at 11:00 a.m. A letter of confirmation is sent to the agency a week prior to the visit. The letter includes the following seven questions to be discussed in the interview excluding the material in parentheses:

1. What services do you provide?
2. What problems do you face as an agency?

3. What problems and needs exist among those you serve? (Write quotes.)
4. What trends do you see that will affect your work over the next five years?
5. What can a church, a group of churches, or volunteers do to help? (List in order of priority.)
6. If you had an opportunity to challenge church people to help, what would you say?
7. May we pray for you and your work before we leave? (Pray for the person interviewed, the agency/organization, and the people/families served.) [The letter shouldn't include the material in parentheses, but the volunteers' field report form should.]

During the interview, the members of the team introduce themselves and present calling cards with their names and phone numbers. They explain they're one of many teams doing a community needs assessment. They say, "Thank you for your time. We represent a church that wants to learn about the needs in the community and how to help meet them. Our goals are to build relationships with community agencies and leaders, learn about community services, assess problems and community needs, and determine how our church can be involved." Then ask the seven questions included in the letter (listed on a field report form) and record responses. Include the date, the name of the person interviewed, and the name, address, and phone number of the agency. Return the completed field report forms to a community assessment task force member in your church after interviewing the two agencies.

The task force or some other designated group in the church evaluates the results of the field report visits. They prayerfully select one or more ministry projects. They define SMART goals for each project and develop strategies to reach them that include God's wisdom principles (See Chapter 9). They secure necessary resources and periodically evaluate the fruit of the ministry project. They make adjustments to make it more fruitful. For example, through a survey they conducted, a downtown church identified a need of after-school bilingual childcare for Hispanic children in the community from 4:00-6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Describe your strategy to explore needs in your community and identify the ones your church will focus on meeting.

Enlarge Your Prospect List

At any given time, fish are in an active, neutral, or negative feeding mode. Usually, most of the fish aren't feeding. When I'm fishing, many times on my depth-finder I see evidence of fish directly under the boat that aren't biting at all. Active fish are easy to catch on a variety of lures. Those in a negative feeding mode can't be caught on hook and line. You're probably in a negative feeding mode when someone offers you alfalfa sprouts after your third piece of pie at the conclusion of Thanksgiving dinner! "No, thank you!" The same principle applies to fishing for men. At any given time, some persons are more open to consider Christ and his church than others are. Their openness is often closely connected to some life stress they're experiencing. They're looking for relief. Rick Warren suggests a prospect list consisting of second time visitors to the church, close friends and relatives of church members, people going through divorce, those who feel the need for a recovery program, first-time parents, those with terminal diseases, couples with marital problems, parents with problem children, recently unemployed persons or those with financial problems, and new residents in the community (*Church Evangelism* by John Mark Terry, pp. 112-113). Identify the most pressing needs of those in your target group.

Expand your prospect list to at least three times your present average Sunday morning worship attendance. Think unchurched friends and relatives of members. Develop strategies to reach out to two or more of the categories of people on Rick Warren's list.

Cultivate Existing Relationships

You probably began attending your church because of the influence of a friend or relative already in the church. That principle will still be true twenty years from now. The friend/relative door is the widest, most used entry way into your church. To take full advantage of it, don't just verbally encourage your congregation to strengthen their relationships with their friends and relatives. Structure the church to support their efforts through accountability for reaching out and through planned outreach events.

The accountability could take place in small groups. At least once each month group members could share how things are going in their outreach to their friends and relatives who don't yet know Jesus.

Schedule low key outreach events to develop relationships between believers and not-yet-believers (soil preparing events). This could include carnivals, car shows, athletic events, bus trips, concerts, drama presentations, fishing trips, etc. Introduce visitors to other believers who have similar interests. Some outreach events should answer the questions and meet the needs of not-yet-believers (sowing and cultivating). Some events should challenge them to commit their lives to Jesus Christ (harvesting). I suggest six soil-preparing events, three sowing and cultivating events, and two harvesting events every year. Inviting unchurched men to a Promise Keepers rally could include soil preparing, sowing and cultivating, and harvesting times all on the same weekend. Typically, these special events will be some time other than Sunday morning.

Schedule an outreach service one Sunday each month to which members are encouraged to invite their friends and relatives. Make sure the service is visitor friendly.

Develop need-meeting outreach events that support individuals who are building relationships with unchurched friends and relatives.

Visit First-Time Worshippers

If laypersons visit first time worshippers for fifteen minutes on Sunday afternoon or Monday, about 85% return the following week (Terry, p. 127). Give a gift with the church's name on it such as a mug filled with candy, a pen or pencil, a telephone notepad or a refrigerator magnet. This will remind them about the church every time they see it. For visitors to return consistently, you need quality Bible teaching, worship, preaching, and music (Terry, p. 99). For long-term health and growth, churches need healthy small groups, leadership, relationships, spirituality, worship services, evangelism, ministries, and structures. All eight are essential. Major weakness in any of them opens a door through which newcomers might leave the church.

Develop a strategy to follow-up first time visitors to your church.

Make Follow-up Home Visits after VBS

Vacation Bible School can bring new families to the church, but usually won't without follow-up visits. Focus on kids who went to your VBS but don't attend any church regularly.

During follow-up home visits (no longer than fifteen minutes), inform parents/guardians how your church programs can benefit both them and their children.

Visit New Residents in the Community

Request a list of new residents from the Welcome Wagon. Encourage your members to be alert for new persons moving into the community and to give the church office their address. Some new residents will be looking for a new church home, whereas others, not previously churched, might be more open to consider starting than they were at their previous address where life was probably more stable.

Develop an attractive church information packet. Establish and carry out a plan for enthusiastic members of your church to visit new residents in your community soon after their arrival to give them this packet and a gift from your church (coffee mug, pen, etc.).

Reach out through Home Surveys

Home surveys reveal who the unchurched are in your community and what they think their problems are. Rick Warren spent twelve weeks going door-to-door visiting people in the area where he was going to plant a church. He politely listened to what they thought their most pressing needs were.

You could ask:

1. Do you attend a local church regularly? (If they do, thank them for their time and move on.)
2. If they don't, ask, "Is it a problem with believing in God, or is it something else?"
3. Ask what they consider to be the most pressing needs in the community.
4. Ask, "May I send you our church's monthly newsletter?" (If yes, get their name and address).

Create and implement a plan to visit homes and build bridges with the unchurched in your community.

Reach out through the Mail

Send a professionally designed postcard to a large number of homes in your community. See www.churchoutreach.com. It's better to send six cards over the course of a year to 1000 homes than one card to 6000 homes. Repetition gets attention. Always invite people to come to

church on a specific date, e.g., to the candlelight service on December 24th at 7:00 p.m. If you get one-half of one percent return, you're doing well. People who respond often have urgent unmet needs in their lives that motivate them to risk going to an unfamiliar church with unfamiliar people to find relief.

Some churches target a smaller number of homes nearest the church, e.g., 400 homes, and send a monthly letter for a year. The names and addresses of those 400 homes may be purchased from InfoUSA by calling 1-800-284-8353 (www.infousa.com). Recruit volunteers to hand address and stamp the envelopes and sign the letters. You might get calls from a few irate persons who receive them. Just apologize and take their names off the list.

These letters invite the residents to the church for a specific event on a specific date. This is more effective than a general invitation to attend the church. Focused effort on 400 homes yields about a one percent return—i.e., about four families. Using the mail to make monthly contacts with unchurched extended family members of those already in the church has potential for a greater return than cold contacts do. Get their names and addresses from your parishioners.

Send a professionally designed postcard to a large number of homes in your zip code six times/year, or monthly send a letter to selected homes for a year, or send letters to unchurched extended family members for a year. If you do home surveys, focus on those willing to receive your newsletter.

Reach out through Sports

If your church has a gymnasium, use it to attract youth and young adults. Youth and young adults already in your church can invite others to come for volleyball night or basketball games. During a break, share a devotional and a personal testimony from one of the Christian players.

Your church can sponsor a softball or other team that plays in a local church league on which seekers are invited to play. Sunday school classes or youth groups can schedule bowling or miniature golf outings and invite friends and relatives. You could sponsor Super Bowl parties at various homes. Especially in Olympic years, you could sponsor your own Olympics with medals for first through third places for a variety of Olympic sports and age groups. The options are almost endless, but the principle is to use sports to develop relationships between Christians and unchurched friends and relatives.

For the last nine years, I've coached the throws for my local high school's track and field teams. This has enabled me to develop relationships with many teenagers and to demonstrate God's love to them in practical ways. Some people in most churches can impact kids and youth through coaching.

Develop strategies to use our culture's interest in sports to bring people to Christ and his church.

Reach out through Music

Schedule a contemporary Christian group or artist to come to the church to attract youth and young adults. You could have an interaction time afterwards at which youth could share what they liked and didn't like about the performance. Several of the youth could share their testimony. If your church can't afford such a group or artist, you could take youth to Creation, held the end of June every year near Mount Union, Pennsylvania, or something similar in your own state.

Develop strategies to use people's interest in music to bring them to Christ and his church.

Reach out to Children

Serve kids and parents through mother's day out, kindergarten, day care, after school programs, tutoring programs, day camp, sports camp or children's choirs. Familiarize yourself with necessary regulations related to facilities and staffing. Parents love those who love their children.

Build bridges to unchurched parents by meeting their children's needs.

Reach out to the Elderly

By definition, the elderly are older than you are! If you're eighty-five, they're at least ninety. Your definition keeps changing as you age.

Do worship services at local nursing and retirement homes. Visit and build relationships with the residents. Spend most of your time listening. Offer transportation to your church services.

Surveys of residents in your community will identify unchurched elderly persons who still live at home. The surveyors should ask whether they'd welcome a periodic visit by someone from the church who'd call before visiting or if they have needs the church could meet such as lawn care, transportation, snow removal, etc. All services are free. This could be an effective outreach strategy for a church composed mostly of senior citizens. Churches tend to attract and hold people like themselves. Reaching out to the elderly could be an excellent ministry for those who are newly retired or for older members of the congregation whose health is still good.

Build bridges to the elderly in your community.

Do Evangelism

Prepare to Fish

Two fishermen met on vacation and were soon telling fish stories. The first described a 295-pound salmon he caught on four-pound test line that took him hours to land. He did not spare a single detail. The second told about snagging a lantern made in 1912 on a lure while fishing in a local lake. The most amazing thing was that the lantern was still burning. The first

fisherman got right to the point. He said, “I’ll take 280 pounds off my salmon, if you’ll put out the light in your lantern.”

Satan’s goal is to extinguish your light. Jesus said, “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Your light shines by your words, attitudes, and behavior. When it does, the captives of darkness can’t help but notice. You can expect many “cockroach” and a few “moth” responses. When your light shines, the majority of not-yet-believers will want to get away from it like cockroaches run when the lights are turned on at night. Some of them, however, will be attracted like moths to a light bulb.

It’s essential to let your light shine by the way you live, but that isn’t enough. Based on information gathered by surveys I’ve done of at least thirty ERC congregations, people rarely ask believers why they’re so different, even if the difference is dramatic. Fewer than 10% of people in these congregations have been asked three or more times in their lifetime something similar to, “What makes you so different?” We have to take the initiative to share God’s word with others. They aren’t won to Christ just by watching me or you. They have to put their faith in God and his word. “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

Effective witnesses for Christ are clean, bold, and Spirit-filled. The acrostic CBS will help you remember these three.

To be an effective witness, you have to be clean. “If a man cleanses himself from the latter [self-serving purposes], he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work” (2 Timothy 2:21). People spend considerable effort trying to cover up their sins. You can fool others for a while, but sooner or later your sins catch up with you. God knows every un-Jesus-like area in your life. You can’t fool him at all.

God’s solution is to call sin what he does—sin! He wants you to change your attitude, forsake it and receive his cleansing. The corrosion of a battery’s terminals blocks the flow of electrical current. Sin blocks the flow of God’s power through your life. You can clean battery terminals with baking soda. When you do, the current flow is restored. Confession is God’s baking soda. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Confession makes us usable. What sins do you need to confess? Are you seeking God’s kingdom and righteousness first (Matthew 6:33)? Are you giving God your leftover time, talents, and finances? Have you lost your first love for Jesus?

Confess the specific sins of which God convicts you, and you’ll be a clean channel through which living water can flow to others.

Cooperating with God in his saving work doesn’t feel safe. We’re involved in a war. Lifeguards and firemen routinely take risks to rescue others. Even if they’re successful, those rescued will ultimately die of other causes. How much more should we take risks for the eternal welfare of others! Our tendency is to go just as far as we can safely and no farther. Reaching out to others will always feel like a risk, even if we’ve done it 1000 times before. We can’t rescue

anyone from our comfort zone. Reaching out to others is like our first plunge off the high diving board. It starts with fear and ends with exhilaration. Plunge into the evangelistic opportunities God provides, depending on Jesus' promise to be with you always (Matthew 28:18-20).

Aim to speak or act boldly for Jesus at least once every day.

The control and power of the Holy Spirit are essential to evangelism. When you fill your car's gas tank, gasoline displaces the air. Self is like the air, and the Holy Spirit is like the gasoline. Self must give way to the Spirit. Daily yield the steering wheel of your life (mind, emotions, and will) to the Spirit of Christ. Since he commands you to be filled with his Spirit, it is obviously his will (Ephesians 5:18). If you ask anything according to his will, he promises to hear and answer your prayer (1 John 5:14-15). You can literally do anything God asks you to do when you're filled with his Spirit.

Claim the filling of the Holy Spirit every day before you do anything else.

Focus on Existing Relationships

Your extended family is to your church what oil deposits are to Exxon Mobil. Help members identify and develop strategies to reach their extended family members who don't yet have a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. This should be your primary evangelistic strategy. Those won to Christ through the influence of friends or relatives who attend your church are much more likely to be assimilated into your church than those who've no such connections. Focusing on existing relationships includes developing intentional strategies to generate prayer for extended family members, to demonstrate love to them in concrete ways and to share the good news in relevant ways. These topics have already been addressed. You'll receive a greater return on your evangelistic resources from this group than any other. As extended family members receive Christ, your potential congregation continues to expand through the addition of all their extended family members.

Orient your evangelistic strategies around praying for, serving, and sharing the good news with members' extended families.

Use Small Groups to Do Evangelism

Using evangelistic small groups is a strategy with great potential. Given the wisdom of focusing on existing relationships, the most effective evangelistic small groups are composed of the extended family members of those who already attend the church. Also develop some groups to reach those in the community who aren't part of any member's extended family.

Many churches would benefit immensely if their goal for members were a worship experience, a small group experience, and ministry involvement each week. Leading a home evangelistic small group on a Sunday or Wednesday evening for most members would be far more beneficial than attending another service. Going to services and listening to the minister is no substitute for works of service and doing ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12). Works of service build up the body of Christ.

Let me suggest ten principles that make evangelistic small groups effective.

Be simple. Most pre-Christians are virtually ignorant of the Bible and theology. Pay attention to the ABCs of the faith and the milk of the word.

Be brief. To maximize participation, minimize how long the group meets. Aim for five to ten weeks.

Be strategic. Expand your ability to do more evangelistic home Bible studies by including an apprentice in your group who's being trained to lead a similar group in the future. Include a discipler who'll follow up those who make a commitment to Christ. This person could take over leadership of those who want to continue after the group has run its five- to ten-week course. Everyone else in the group should be a seeker. No other believers are allowed because they can easily intimidate the seekers.

Be praying. Effective evangelism depends on prayer. The leader, apprentice, and discipler should individually pray daily by name for the salvation of all who are in the group and together for them before or after meetings. Get prayer-backing from others in the church.

Be clear. Your goal is to make the gospel as understandable as you can, depending on the Holy Spirit to remove the blinders that cover the spiritual eyes of unbelievers. Short words beat long words to the finish line of clear communication. Get feedback from members of the group to make sure you're understood.

Be family. Eat a simple-to-prepare meal together before the meeting. It could be a potluck, pizza, spaghetti, or something else fast and simple. Don't talk about the Bible or the content of the meeting. Just get to know one another. Use this time to build relationships.

Be real. Don't pretend you have everything together. I once heard Bernard Briscoe say, "I wasn't that bad before [he came to know Christ]. I'm not that good now, and it's been a struggle."

Be vulnerable. Use part of the meeting for any questions anyone in the group would like to ask. Promise an answer at the next meeting if you don't have one when the question is asked. This assures that you're answering people's real questions. Talk to your pastor or another leader about the question if you need help.

Be relevant. The small group meetings must meet the needs that group members have or they won't continue to attend it. Major on how God's word applies to life today.

Be bold. At some point in the life of your small group, you'll need to ask persons to make a faith commitment to Jesus Christ. You'll almost certainly have to move outside your comfort zone to do so. The best time to draw the net is usually toward the end of the group's scheduled meetings, after members have developed trust in you as a leader and understanding of the gospel.

Alpha is an informal, friendly, non-pressured ten-week course that gives people an opportunity to explore the basics of the Christian faith. Training is necessary to offer Alpha courses. An Alpha meeting usually consists of eating together, watching a video that treats one of the basics of the Christian faith and then discussing the video together. Topics include, for example, "Who is Jesus?", "Why Did Jesus Die?", "How Can I be Sure of My Faith?", and "Does God Still Heal Today?" There's a day or weekend retreat midway through the course which focuses on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Extensive Alpha resources are available. Their website is www.alphausa.org.

I wrote *The Ultimate Connection* to provide six weeks of material for evangelistic home Bible studies. The topics are: week 1—Is Christianity Relevant?; week 2—A Trial for the Ages [looks at the uniqueness of Jesus]; week 3—The All-time Best Seller [looks at the reliability of the Bible]; week 4—Are All Religions Equal?; week 5—Heaven Isn't for Good People [looks at the fallacy of depending on good deeds to get to heaven]; week 6—Beyond Belief [looks at the nature of biblical faith]. The last lesson includes an invitation to invite Jesus into one's life to take control. Pastor Bob Huber led persons to Christ using this material in evangelistic home Bible studies in his ministry in New Mexico. To get to know one another, the group should eat together before the study.

In *Church for the Unchurched* by George Hunter III (p. 100-102), you'll find a description of an evangelistic outreach used by the Church on Brady in Los Angeles. The church is now called Mosaic. The survey began with a door-to-door survey asking:

- "What do you think are some of the needs in this community?"
- "What are your solutions to these needs or problems?"
- "Do you think the Bible has anything to say to this?"
- "Have you ever read the Bible yourself?"
- "Would you be willing to join some neighbors in a Bible study to discuss some solutions to problems people face?"
- If "yes" to previous question, "Would you be willing to open your home to host a group?" [Every fifth home they surveyed was willing to host a group].

The groups met for an hour once each week for five weeks. They used a contemporary translation and a photocopied passage of the week. They focused on one of three areas depending on the group. Educated, idea-oriented people looked at what happiness is. The five passages they studied include Psalm 1, Psalm 51:1-13, Romans 3:21-26, Romans 8:29-39, and 1 Corinthians 13. Less educated persons studied Mark 1:21-34, Mark 10:13-16, Mark 10:17-31, Mark 12:41-44, and Luke 23:32-43. Persons who struggled with addiction or had been abused studied Mark 1:21-28, Mark 2:13-17, Mark 3:1-6, Mark 4:35-41, and Mark 9:33-37. Six questions compose their approach in each week's study. They ask: What did you like? What did you not like? What did you not understand? What did you learn about God? What do we want to do in response? What phrase, thought, or sentence would you take home with you?

Sunday school classes and cell groups can both be evangelistic. Follow the ten principles already outlined. Choose material that connects and a leader who can identify with the needs of

your target group. Invite at least thirty people before the first meeting to a designated meeting place with the expectation of getting six to ten. Personal invitations are most effective.

Support groups often bear evangelistic fruit. Changed lives attract others who want to be changed. People who admit they're major league broken (e.g., those with addictions) are more open to receiving Christ than those who think they're whole with a few minor flaws. There are support groups for drug and alcohol addiction, eating disorders, those who've lost loved ones, the divorced, single parents, grandparents raising grandchildren, those with various illnesses, bipolar, Down syndrome parents, etc. All such groups are need-oriented. Celebrate Recovery is a program to minister to people with all sorts of hurts, habits, and hang-ups. Eighty-five percent of the people who've gone through Celebrate Recovery at Saddleback Valley Community Church are now active members of the church. About seventy-three percent of them came from outside the church. Forty-two percent who've been through the program are using their gifts and talents to serve the Lord in the church. Go to www.celebraterecovery.com for more information.

Design and launch evangelistic small groups that meet the needs of pre-Christians.

Do Servant Evangelism

One way to connect people in the church with the harvest is to identify needs in your community and fill them through free unexpected acts of kindness in the name of Jesus. This approach is explained in detail in *The Conspiracy of Kindness* by Steve Sjogren (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, 1993, ISBN 0892838329). Need-meeting acts of kindness share God's love in ways people can understand. They rarely produce repentant sinners on the spot, but they get Christians into the streets rubbing shoulders with pre-Christians. These acts can set the stage for further relationship and conversation. The appendix of Sjogren's book contains fifty-eight servant evangelism ideas two or more persons can use.

Use servant evangelism to demonstrate God's love in practical ways and build a positive reputation for your church in your community.

Do Prayer-Walking

Prayerwalking is a book by Steve Hawthorne and Graham Kendrick (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 1993, ISBN 0884192687). Prayer-walking can be done individually, with small groups, whole congregations, or groups of churches. The book contains many inspiring testimonies of removing the spiritual darkness in neighborhoods and cities. This book could be used in a prayer seminar.

Organize prayer-walks in your community.

Do Prayer-Evangelism

After prayer-walking through a neighborhood, begin to meet the people who live there and ask if you can pray for them. In India, a church planter begins by prayer walking through the village and then knock on doors and ask whether anyone in that household has a need he can pray for. He prays with them and invites them to pray to God in the name of Jesus, telling them

their prayers will be more powerful if they do. He returns some days or a week later to see if the prayers have been answered (which often happens). He asks the family if they'd be willing to have a prayer cell in their home to pray for their family and neighbors.

Use prayer evangelism as one of your outreach strategies.

Special Days and Events

Easter and Christmas events have the potential to expose many persons to the gospel who don't usually attend church services. These services should always include an explanation of the gospel and an invitation to receive Christ. Make special effort to get the names and addresses of all guests. You could have a drawing for a very nice gift for guests who put their name and address on a three-by-five card. Put these persons on your church mailing list. Make a follow-up visit to their homes.

Friend Day involves targeting a specific day on which persons in the congregation are encouraged to invite an unchurched friend to the worship service. Materials are available through www.churchgrowth.org. It isn't unusual for church attendance to double on Friend Day. The first year we did Friend Day at the Saxton First Church of God the attendance increased from an average of about 100 to 169. At Broad Top City Church of God the attendance grew from an average of about 50 to 111. Friend Day materials help you plan for the event and follow-up your guests. Most years we did Friend Day, some of those who visited kept attending. It's important to follow the process the program outlines.

FRANtastic Days is a sequel to Friend Day. Instead of one Friend Day, this program includes a Friend Day, Relative Day, Associate Day and Neighbor Day. Otherwise it is similar to Friend Day.

Develop strategies to use Easter and Christmas services and special events to draw the evangelistic net in your church.

Worship Services

Worship services that are inspiring provide an atmosphere where people can be expected to commit themselves to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. If an NCD survey reveals inspiring worship is one of your strengths and is fifty or higher, you can expect evangelistic fruit through your worship service. If inspiring worship is one of your weakest areas and is forty or lower, you'd be wiser to focus on evangelism through some other channel.

If you haven't taken an NCD survey and don't know your inspiring worship score, a self-evaluation of your worship services won't necessarily be accurate. Most people think their church is friendly, like most grandparents think their grandchildren are above average in intelligence! Visitors often draw a very different conclusion (about the church, and the grandchildren!). Accurate assessment is important because the atmosphere that makes worship inspiring affects evangelism. If there's a fire in the movie theatre, the popcorn sales are pretty much over! If people don't meet God in your service, they can't be saved there.

Visitor friendly churches have many friendly and helpful greeters. Signs clearly mark the location of restrooms, classrooms, the sanctuary, etc. Parking is convenient and easy. Restrooms are modern and clean. Buildings are clean and well-maintained. Worship services aren't predictable. Nursery facilities are topnotch. Children receive excellent care. Music is well-done and uplifting. Many persons participate in the service. Testimonies build up the congregation. Enthusiasm is evident. Worshipers expect to meet God. Preaching is biblical and practical. Every service includes a challenge to some kind of commitment. People counsel and follow up those who make commitments to Christ.

Improve the ability of your worship services to inspire the congregation and make plans to use them to bring persons to faith in Christ and membership in his church.

Plant New Churches

C. Peter Wagner believes planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic method. (*Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*, p. 33). The conversion rate in new church plants is four times higher and the growth rate faster than in older churches (*Church Evangelism*, John Mark Terry, p. 204). Lyle Schaller suggests planting at least two to three percent of the number of churches in a denomination every year (Terry, p. 205) because about one percent of churches die every year (p. 204). The best way to accomplish that goal is existing churches mothering other churches. Such churches have a higher long-term survival rate than parachute drop plants. Healthy churches multiply evangelists, disciples, leaders, small groups, and churches.

Make plans to plant a church, even if doing so is still ten or more years ahead.

Do Assimilation

Following-up new believers within 24-hours of their commitment to Christ is critical to their assimilation. New converts aren't automatically glued to the fellowship. Their tendency is to slip away. Big time! A church of the Nazarene pastor in Anaheim, California, Craig Rench, has calculated that in American evangelical churches only two to sixteen percent of new converts are still in the church one year after conversion. That's a frightening statistic! (See www.nph.com/nphweb/html/h2ol/articleDisplay.jsp?mediaId=2372823).

Let me suggest four ways to Velcro new believers to your pews.

1. Pray for new believers. You're in a spiritual war, not at a picnic. "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4). Satan attacks new believers immediately after their decision to follow Christ to decrease their faith and increase their doubt. He knows those who fall away from a church or never plug into it won't do any serious damage to his kingdom. Like a lion, he preys on the young in the faith rather than mature adults because they're easier targets.
2. Assign a spiritual mother or father for a year to the new believer (males with males, females with females). For guidance, see the material in Chapter 2 on mentoring.

3. Make every effort to enfold new believers into a small group that'll nurture them.
4. Find new believers a place of ministry that uses their abilities to make a difference for the kingdom.

Devise and execute a strategy to enfold new believers into the life of your church.

Deploy Believers

Research reveals that about 10% of those in the typical congregation have the gift of evangelism (*Natural Church Development*, p. 34). If you have a baseball player on your team who can accurately throw a ball 100 mph, you'd be wise to make him a pitcher! If you have someone with the gift of evangelism, make evangelism his/her primary ministry.

Scatter persons with the gift of evangelism throughout various ministries of your church to develop and lead an evangelistic component in each one.

Offer "Becoming a Contagious Christian" or some other tool at least once each year to train believers to tell how God has made a difference in their personal lives and to share the gospel, using the Roman Road, the Four Spiritual Laws, "Connecting with God," etc. (See "Connecting with God" in Appendix C).

Select and use training tools to teach believers in your church how to share their testimony and how to share the gospel with others.

Train believers how to respond to common objections to the gospel. See the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry website at www.carm.org/objections.htm where you'll find responses to forty objections and/or answers to 100 common questions under "Get Equipped" on the Way of the Master website at www.wayofthemaster.com.

Work as a Team

Pastor David Yonggi Cho's 25,000 plus cell groups in the Yoido Full Gospel Church in South Korea pray for and work together to serve persons who aren't yet Christians. Their goal is to add two new believers each year to each group (Terry, p. 97). Teamwork enhances evangelistic effectiveness. It makes sense. For a football team to win, each player must carry out his role effectively. Some kick, some tackle, some block, some run with the ball, some pass, and some catch passes. Employing the strengths of each player makes the team as effective as it can be.

Small group members have different roles in bringing persons to Christ. Each person doing what he/she does best makes the whole team as effective as possible. Some are good at being a friend of those to whom the group is reaching out. Some excel at answering questions about the faith. Some communicate Christ most effectively by telling how he's changed their life. Some are natural inviters—inviting pre-Christians to group social activities, worship services, special events, etc. Some find their greatest joy and effectiveness in serving such as

offering babysitting service while a pre-Christian couple goes out for an evening. Others excel at sharing the message of the gospel verbally. As pre-Christians interact with different members of a small group and see God at work in their lives, they get a clearer picture of the faith than by observing only one person. Getting to know the members of the group also makes it easier to join it.

It's helpful to focus on four to six pre-Christians that your group will reach out to repeatedly. These will probably be extended family members of those in your group whose life situation makes them more receptive to the gospel than other extended family members would be.

People are more open to consider the gospel and alter their life direction during times of upheaval, change, and uncertainty. Pastors know this principle from experience in hospital visitation and crisis counseling. If persons are ever going to be open to getting closer to God, it's immediately after the doctor tells them there isn't anything more that can be done. If a guy's wife threatens to leave him, he's about as open to change as he's ever going to be. Love given away to people who are shipwrecked by life's circumstances isn't forgotten. During such times, persons are most likely to turn to God and his church, especially if Christian friends and relatives have already prepared the way by prayer and loving deeds.

Develop a strategy to employ as many small group members as possible to reach out to selected extended family members of those in the group.

Multiply Evangelists

One of your church's greatest resources is the enthusiasm of brand new believers. Harness this resource for the kingdom. New believers are usually so excited about their sins being forgiven through God's undeserved favor that some of their friends and relatives hear far more about it than they care to. Some with whom they share will also receive Christ. Encourage new believers to share their faith even though they don't know a lot about it. They know enough to tell what happened to them! No one expects them to be a theology professor!

The more acreage a farmer sows the greater harvest he can anticipate. Even if acreage isn't increased, planting 30,000-35,000 seeds per acre yields a greater harvest than 20,000 per acre (<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/crops/CornPlantDensity04.htm>). The best way to increase the harvest of souls is to increase the gospel seeds sown in your community.

One way to sow more seeds is to multiply evangelists. Evangelists should train others to evangelize in an ever-expanding circle. If your church has experienced few conversions during the last several years, it's probably because relatively few seeds have been sown. "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows" (Galatians 6:7).

Encourage new believers to share their faith with their friends and relatives who don't know Jesus and provide support they need for the task (mentors, books, videos, etc.).

Another way to multiply evangelists is to pair persons with the gift of or experience in evangelism with others to show them how to share their faith. Show-how beats tell-how. That's how I learned to do evangelism. I accompanied some guys with the Navigators when they did evangelism in college dorms. After watching them a few times, they plunged me into the action one evening when there were two guys in the dorm room. My trainer told me to share with one of the guys while he did the same with the other. None of those early contacts received Christ as their Savior and Lord, but seeing evangelism prepared me to do it far better than the safety of evangelistic practice sessions with other Christians. I'm not suggesting there's no place for such practice sessions. There is.

Pair up those with experience in or the gift of evangelism with others to train them how to share their faith while visiting those who have recently attended your church for the first or second time.

Evaluate How Healthy Your Evangelism Is

To evaluate the health of your church's evangelism, complete the Healthy Evangelism Underlying Issues Inventory in Appendix A.

Chapter 7

Healthy Ministry

Seek Significance in Your Church

Almost everyone wants his/her life to be significant. Are you looking for significance in your work? It's unlikely you'll find it there. Ralph Mattson and Arthur Miller in *Finding a Job*

You Can Love estimate fifty to eighty percent of working Americans hold jobs that don't fit their desires and abilities. Lasting significance comes, not from your job, but from finding your place in the church.

If God uniquely shapes Christians to impact the world through ministry, why isn't Christianity making more of a positive impact on our culture? Many Christians are more shaped by culture than shapers of it. They march behind the pied piper of materialism, looking for real life precisely where Jesus said it can't be found (Luke 12:15). They're ever learning but never understanding that things can't satisfy. They're like a man dying of thirst who lusts for salt.

Americans turn over every rock to find happiness, but, pursued for its own sake, it remains elusive. Happiness results from being where God wants you to be, saying what he wants you to say, and doing what he wants you to do.

God created fish to swim, deer to run, moles to dig, squirrels to climb, and hawks to fly. Your most important role is to play your part in extending God's kingdom on earth (Matthew 6:10). Your gifts, skills, passion, and temperament are the necessary equipment. God designed you to help build his church!

Paul compares the church, Christ's body, to the human body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Each part performs a specific purpose. Coordinated effort brings maximum results. Discus or javelin throwers achieve maximum distance when they use their whole body to generate power instead of just one arm.

God has molded and shaped you (Psalm 139:13-16a) to further his kingdom and experience deep satisfaction in the process. Your spiritual gifts are part of that design. You've at least one gift (1 Corinthians 12:11) and probably more.

Matthew 25:14-30 suggests if you don't use your God-given abilities, you'll be judged severely. You might not be a five-talent person, but God expects you to use your gift(s) to serve him.

Find your place in the body of Christ and work together with other believers to maximize your church's effectiveness.

Do Gift-Driven Ministry

Spiritual gifts are God-given abilities to serve him. The Holy Spirit apportions them among believers as he chooses (1 Corinthians 12:11). They're different from natural abilities and acquired skills which unbelievers also possess.

You don't have all the gifts. In 1 Corinthians 12:29-30, Paul asks, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?" The expected answer to all these questions is "No!"

Every part of the human body contributes to the well-being of the whole. The heart's pumping feeds life-giving blood to the fingers, and the fingers, grasping a fork impaled in some spinach, help feed the heart. You need others in the church, and they need you. Ministry isn't just clergy-business. It's every believer's business.

Knowledge of my own gifts emerged through ministry to others. I didn't know I had the gift of shepherding until I started using it. Try your hand in many areas of service, starting with ministry areas in which you've the greatest interest. Be patient! No one jumps into the water for the very first time and sets a world record in the 400-meter freestyle. God gives some infants Olympic-caliber swimming potential, but their first strokes don't reveal it. Developing your gifts takes time. It doesn't start until you "get into the water." God-given gifts, skills, passion, and temperament plus comfort-zone stretching faith plus training plus effort result in fruitful ministry.

I'm classifying the spiritual gifts mentioned in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28, and Ephesians 4:11 into two groups. Primary gifts are prophecy, teaching, helps, giving, administration, encouragement, leadership, mercy, evangelism, shepherding, and hospitality. Supporting gifts include apostleship, discernment, faith, healing, interpretation, knowledge, miracles, tongues, and wisdom. They strengthen the primary gifts but remain secondary. We'll test only for primary gifts. Other spiritual gift inventories make no distinction between primary and supportive gifts. If you make no distinction, I recommend purchasing *The Three Colors of Ministry* by Christian Schwarz available from ChurchSmart (1-800-253-4276).

The following spiritual gift inventory will help those not presently involved in any ministry to find their place. Electric sanders, screwdrivers, drills, saws, etc. are designed for different purposes, but all are useful to build a house. All rely on some source of power and are worthless without it. Powered by self, your gifts become weapons. Powered by the Spirit of God, they'll make a significant contribution to God's work on earth.

The spiritual gifts inventory will also help some of you evaluate whether you need to exchange your ministry for one that's a better fit. Some key questions to ask to determine if your ministry fits your spiritual gifts include:

1. Are you motivated to serve in your present ministry? ____ Yes ____ No
2. Do others affirm your contribution? ____ Yes ____ No
3. Can you see results from your ministry? ____ Yes ____ No
4. Is your ministry fulfilling? ____ Yes ____ No
5. Can you be yourself in your ministry? ____ Yes ____ No

If your answer to two or more of these questions is "No," you're probably not in the ministry for which God designed you.

Spiritual Gifts Inventory

Circle the bullet at the beginning of each statement that describes you. Then record the number of circled bullets in each group in the Spiritual Gifts Inventory Chart.

Group 1 (Bullets Circled = ____)

- People tell you that you “step on their toes” when you share the word.
- You’re open and honest about your shortcomings.
- You’re often blunt.
- You proclaim God’s word to others without thinking about the consequences.
- You confront others with the truth.
- You know the message you share came from God.

Group 2 (Bullets Circled = ____)

- You do research to determine if statements others make are true.
- You’re good at organizing details and facts.
- You enjoy studying.
- People say they’re blessed when you share your insights about biblical passages.
- You understand the basics of God’s word and how they apply to life.
- You have a passion to apply God’s word to yourself and others.

Group 3 (Bullets Circled = ____)

- You’re motivated to meet the physical needs of your church’s leaders.
- You judge the value of service by the amount of appreciation received.
- You enjoy ministry that isn’t in the public eye.
- Meeting others’ physical needs gives you joy and fulfillment.
- You value meeting the needs of your pastor and others who minister.
- You think a lot about how you can meet the needs of others.

Group 4 (Bullets Circled = ____)

- You invest money wisely.
- Giving to meet the needs of individuals and ministries gives you more joy and fulfillment than anything else.
- You’re far more concerned about giving than receiving.
- You don’t want recognition for giving.
- You’re sensitive to financial needs that others don’t recognize.
- You live on less so you can give more to further God’s work.

Group 5 (Bullets Circled = ____)

- You know how to subdivide tasks into manageable parts.
- You excel at organizing, coordinating, and delegating work.
- You’re good at seeing the big picture and how each part relates to the whole.
- Organizing and managing resources to accomplish a goal gives you great joy and satisfaction.
- You develop strategies to achieve goals.
- You’re frustrated by disorganization.

Group 6 (Bullets Circled = ____)

- You’re good at lifting up people who are down emotionally.

- Encouraging others to make them more effective servants of the Lord gives you joy and fulfillment.
- You emphasize what people are doing right instead of what they're doing wrong.
- You're very committed to helping people become fully devoted disciples by showing the necessary steps.
- You get pleasure from supporting the weak and stabilizing the unstable.
- You challenge and rebuke others if necessary so they'll grow spiritually.

Group 7 (Bullets Circled = ____)

- You're a goal-oriented person who finds joy and fulfillment in taking others with you to accomplish a goal.
- You can "see" what things will be like when the goal is accomplished.
- Others look to you for input about a matter before they make a decision.
- You're able to make others want to reach a goal.
- You intentionally set an example for others to follow.
- You keep pursuing a goal even when others disagree with or oppose you.

Group 8 (Bullets Circled = ____)

- You enjoy visiting those in nursing homes, helping the homeless, working in a food bank, etc.
- You put up with a lot from others without complaining.
- You show your love to others by giving them things to meet their needs.
- Serving others through kind, loving deeds gives you great joy and satisfaction.
- You attract the emotionally and spiritually hurting and meet their needs.
- You desperately want to remove other people's hurts.

Group 9 (Bullets Circled = ____)

- Leading people to open the door of their heart to Jesus gives you more joy and satisfaction than anything else.
- You're burdened by the plight of lost people.
- You share the gospel clearly.
- You're confident that sharing the gospel will provide a solution to people's problems.
- You have a desire to see new believers become part of a local church.
- You're interested in finding answers to the questions critics of the faith ask.

Group 10 (Bullets Circled = ____)

- Seeing others' spiritual progress gives you more joy and satisfaction than anything else.
- You hurt when believers turn back and go their own way instead of God's way.
- You try to protect others from spiritual deception.
- You have a desire to be a spiritual mother or father to others.
- You usually have patience with others while they're developing spiritually.
- You often deny yourself to help others grow spiritually.

Group 11 (Bullets Circled = ____)

- Providing food and/or shelter for believers in need gives you great joy and satisfaction.

- You see visitors to your church as sent by the Lord.
- You see your home as a center for ministry.
- You're blessed by ministering to those who can't return the favor.
- You're more concerned with using your home to bless than to impress others.
- You enjoy showing hospitality to guest speakers, missionaries, visitors, and members of your church.

Spiritual Gifts Inventory Chart

Record the total number of circled bullets in each group. Then place numbers 1-4 after the four highest scoring gifts.

- Group 1 _____ (Prophecy)
 Group 2 _____ (Teaching)
 Group 3 _____ (Helps)
 Group 4 _____ (Giving)
 Group 5 _____ (Administration)
 Group 6 _____ (Encouragement)
 Group 7 _____ (Leadership)
 Group 8 _____ (Mercy)
 Group 9 _____ (Evangelism)
 Group 10 _____ (Shepherding)
 Group 11 _____ (Hospitality)

Spiritual Gift Definitions

Prophecy—The ability to declare God's word clearly with power and conviction.

Teaching—The ability to understand God's word and feed others spiritually by explaining and applying it.

Helps—The ability to recognize and humbly and joyfully meet practical needs so that spiritual ministry can take place in and through those who are helped.

Giving—The desire and ability to give with joy and cheer more than 10% of income to further God's kingdom.

Administration—The ability to humbly exercise authority and to organize God's work.

Encouragement—The ability to comfort and encourage others and challenge them to act.

Leadership—The ability to set goals for the local church in harmony with God's mission.

Mercy—The desire and ability to serve others cheerfully through kind, loving deeds.

Evangelism—The ability to lead others to faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord with unusual consistency.

Shepherding—The ability to lead, feed, and guard a group of believers.

Hospitality—The ability to provide a warm, accepting, loving home environment, perhaps including lodging and food, for believers who need it.

Use Your Abilities, Skills, and Interests in Ministry

Use your natural abilities and acquired skills and interests in God's service. Christ "died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them

and was raised again” (2 Corinthians 5:15). God wants to use everything about you to glorify Jesus Christ and help others do the same.

I majored in biology and worked as an aquatic biologist. For many years it was hard to understand how God could use my background in biology to build his kingdom. Since 2001 I’ve developed a growing awareness of the parallels between how God works in nature and how he wants to work in the church. The basic premise of this book is that God wants your church to reproduce just as every plant and animal he created reproduces. I didn’t waste my years studying biology. The purpose remained dormant for over thirty years, but now I understand it.

I enjoy fishing. Over the years, I’ve tried to use my hobby to bless others. When I was a local church pastor, I developed a relationship with the husband of a member of my congregation that focused on our common interest in fishing. We took a number of trips to a local lake together and became good friends. As a result of building a relational bridge through fishing, I eventually had the opportunity to lead him to faith in Jesus Christ.

The Lord has given me the ability to write. Most of what I’ve written has been books, booklets, and devotionals designed to strengthen others in the faith and equip them to serve the Lord. Let me describe an exception. At one of the churches where I was pastor, we did a missions project in which individuals who wanted to participate were given ten dollars and encouraged to multiply it using the gifts God had given them. I used my writing ability to create an article for *The Pennsylvania Angler* about fishing for yellow perch. I multiplied the ten dollars about tenfold. To me the most obvious God-sighting in the experience was that I sent the article to the editor (100 miles away) by snail mail one day at 3:00 p.m. I got a call from him the next morning at 9:00 a.m. to tell me he wanted to publish it!

I enjoy coaching track and field throwing events. It gives me an opportunity to develop relationships with high school students and other coaches and to influence them for Christ. I was able to help a former head coach of the team, a new believer at the time, grow in his faith by supplying him with discipleship books I’d written. A number of students have voluntarily taken these same materials when I offered them. Once, another assistant coach, who was not a regular church-attender, wanted to hear me preach, so I picked him up and took him along to a church where I was speaking. Moreover, during the 2005 and 2006 seasons, I was able to give 20% to support missions of what I was paid for coaching.

You too can use your skills and interests to build relational bridges to others to influence them for Christ. You might not be the one who leads them to Christ, but you can move them one or more steps in that direction. If you have a skill or interest you *can’t* use for the Lord, you need to lose it!

I’m including a list of skills and interests that’s far from all-inclusive. The purpose is to help you do an inventory of the tools God has given you to bless others. Circle your skills/interests on the list and think of at least one way you could use each to show love to God and others.

Accounting, acrobatics, acting, administration, advertising, agriculture, agronomy, allergies, all-terrain vehicles, analyzing information, animal training, antiques, archaeology, architecture, art, astronomy, badminton, baking, barber, baseball, basketball, bicycling, biology, blacksmithing, bookbinding, brass-worker, bricklaying, bus driving, calligraphy, candle-making, carpentry, ceramics, cheerleading, chemistry, chess, chiropractic, cinematography, cleanup, clerical work, climbing, clock-making, clothier, coaching athletics, coaching leaders, cobbling, communication, compile information, computer engineering, computer games, computer operation, computer programming, computer security, conflict resolution, cooking, coppersmith, counseling, criminology, dancing, debate, delegating, dentistry, drafting, drawing, driving, ecology, economics, editing, electrical engineering, electronics, embroidery, engraving, environmental science, ethics, etiquette, evaluating effectiveness, falconry, fire-building, firefighting, first aid, fishing, football, freight carrier, gem-cutting, generating creative ideas, geography, geology, getting along with others, giving helpful feedback, glassblowing, goal-setting, goldsmith, golf, guitar, gymnastics, handball, hatter, hiking, history, hockey (field), hockey (ice), home electronics, horseback riding, horticulture, hunting, ice skating (figure), ice skating (racing), identifying needs, identifying real issues, interior design, interrogation, interviewing, jogging, journalism, juggling, kayaking, keyboard, knitting, lacrosse, law, leadership, leading change, leading group discussions, leatherworking, library science, linguistics, listening well, lock-picking, logic, marble-work, masonry, mathematics, mechanic, mechanical engineering, medicine, mentoring, meteorology, mimicry, mining, model airplanes, motivating others, motorcycle driving, mountaineering, music composition, music conducting, musical instrument, naturalist, navigation, negotiating, news anchor, nursing, organ, painting, paramedic, percussion instrument, persuasion, pharmacology, photography, physics, piano, plumbing, poetry, poisons, police training, politics, pottery, problem-solving, psychology, public speaking, racquetball, railroad, reading, reed instrument, research techniques, rifles, rollerblading, roller-skating, rowing, rugby, running, sailing, SCUBA diving, sculpture, seamanship, security systems, seismology, self-defense techniques, semi-truck driving, sewing, shotguns, silversmith, singing, skiing, sleight of hand, small truck driving, snowboarding, snowmobile, soccer, softball, squash, stonemasonry, string instrument, support emotionally, swimming, tailoring, teaching, tennis, theology, throwing, trading, ultimate Frisbee, ventriloquism, veterinarian, volleyball, water polo, weaving, weight lifting, wilderness survival, wind instrument, word processing, wrestling, writing clearly/concisely. List others:

Do Ministry That Rings Your Chimes

Passion is a valuable guide to the “body-building” ministry to which God is calling you. Spiritual gift inventories are a recent invention. For over 1900 years no such tools existed. The key has always been need and passion. Your ministry is where your desire to serve intersects the needs of the church and world. The operative question of Christian service is, “What do you want to do for Jesus?” What rings your spiritual chimes? What drives you? What are you internally motivated to do? I wanted to teach the Bible to others long before a spiritual gifts inventory told me I had the gift of teaching. An inventory measures your passion for specific areas of service. Ministry desire is from God.

“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,

for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Philippians 2:12-13). God gives you the desire and ability to accomplish his will. Spiritual passion comes from God. Paul’s passion was to present every man perfect in Christ (Colossians 1:28). He wrote, “To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me” (Colossians 1:29).

Some persons prefer to work with people, some with things and others with information. A friend who attended seminary with me excelled in Hebrew and Greek. He spent a year as a pastoral intern in Idaho. He discovered that working with people didn’t ring his chimes. He prefers to work with information. In 1982 he joined Wycliffe. Since then he’s translated much of the Scriptures into the language of the Quechua in Peru. He relates with people but primarily works with information. He’s touching thousands for Christ in a ministry in which his desires and the world’s needs meet.

Your passion might change as you mature. Jim Moss, Sr., Associate for Church Planting and Renewal for the Eastern Regional Conference of the Churches of God, had a passion to work with youth when he began to work for the Conference in 1977. Over time, church planting and renewal became his passion. My own passion has broadened from discipleship to church health over an eleven-year-period.

You may have a burning desire to work with infants, young children, junior high students, senior high students, young adults, middle age adults, or the elderly. Perhaps you’re highly motivated to help singles, couples, or young families. The church’s task is to fulfill the Great Commission, motivated by love for God and others, and powered by prayer. Every ministry is a piece of the bigger picture of fulfilling the Great Commission. What do you want to do more than anything for Jesus Christ that will contribute to the task of making more and better disciples?

The best way to identify where you should serve is to read and pray over your church’s ministry job descriptions. If your church doesn’t have written ministry job descriptions, developing them should be a high priority. For help in writing job descriptions go to this website: churchstaffing.com/html/job_descriptions/job_descriptions_index.shtml. A helpful tool described on that website is *The Big Book of Job Descriptions for Ministry: Identifying Opportunities and Clarifying Expectations for Ministry* by Larry Gilbert and Cindy Spear. It’s available through Amazon.com for about \$20. You may also use the following pattern to write your own job descriptions.

Ministry: Bread of Life

Ministry description: Newcomers are visited and given a gift of appreciation for having visited our church

Position: Bread of life visitor

Position description: Visit newcomers and present them with a loaf of bread and our thanks for having visited our church

Spiritual gifts: Helps, evangelism, encouragement

Responsible to: Fred Smith (939-5894)

Is church membership required? No

How this ministry helps achieve our vision: It's a vital part of assimilating new persons into our church.

Maturity level required: Adult

Passion required: Desire for new persons to come to know Jesus and become part of our fellowship.

Ministry target: Church visitors

Ministry location: The homes of visitors.

Schedule: Monday evenings

Commitment: 1 hour per week for 6 months

Temperament desired: Promoter or helper

After reading this job description, some will think, "Yes! That's for me." Many will read it and yawn. That's perfectly fine. It indicates God's place of service for them is elsewhere. If you read the job descriptions of all the ministries your church offers and none seem to fit, the Lord wants you to start or assist with a new ministry. What do you really want to do for the Lord that no one is doing yet in your church? I'm guessing that your pastor would love to talk with you about your ministry idea.

Let me add a word of caution. Just because you have a desire to do a ministry doesn't guarantee you can. Many of us need a reality check. A popular TV program has demonstrated that many persons in the United States who are absolutely horrible singers still have a passion to be professional pop singers. The judges on the show didn't always break the news of their incompetence gently! Ministry motives aren't always pure. The five questions already mentioned can help you evaluate whether your passion aligns with God's will. After test-driving a ministry for six months or so, you should have at least four "yes" answers to the following five-question reality check:

1. Am I motivated to serve in my present ministry? ____ Yes ____ No
2. Do others affirm my contribution? ____ Yes ____ No
3. Can I see results from my ministry? ____ Yes ____ No
4. Is my ministry fulfilling? ____ Yes ____ No
5. Can I be myself in my ministry? ____ Yes ____ No

Do Ministry That Fits Your Temperament

You have influencing strengths and weaknesses based on how you usually think, feel, and act. You maximize your influence on others when you use your strengths. To determine your temperament, in each horizontal, numbered row put a 3 behind the characteristic that best describes you, a 2 behind the next best description of you, etc., down to a 0 behind the one that's least like you. Each row will have only one 3, one 2, one 1, and one 0. Answer based on how you see yourself *at work*, or *at church* if you don't work outside the home. For example:

1. Add up the numbers in each vertical column and record the totals in the Temperament Analysis Chart below. The total of the four columns should be 96. If not, check your addition.

2. The highest total indicates your dominant temperament, the next highest your second strongest, etc.

3. Numbers 27 or higher represent significant strengths.

My High Point (check one) ☐ Director ☐ Promoter ☐ Helper ☐ Perfecter

Temperament Descriptions

Directors

Directors excel at starting tasks. They get things moving and done. They're take-charge, dominating, "my way or the highway" individuals. They have bulldog tenacity. They quickly become impatient when life isn't going their way. They aren't very well-tuned to the feelings of others, often unthinkingly offending them because all they can see is their goal. They love challenges and want to be in the middle of the action. Their bottom line is results, and they're pushy to get them. They hate to waste time. They want others to get directly to the point. They're poor listeners. Their decisions aren't influenced by their emotions or possible consequences. Under tension, they push the control pedal to the floor.

They'd be more effective if they focused on patiently listening to and supporting people, worked at being less controlling, and gave people a higher priority than productivity.

Promoters

Promoters excel at influencing people and getting them involved. They're warm, outgoing, and personable. They like to have fun. They make friends easily. Their enthusiasm motivates others. They often make decisions without considering all the facts or consequences. They enjoy being on stage, in the spotlight, in front of people. The desire for public recognition and approval is strong. They rush from one exciting activity to the next. They inspire and at times manipulate others with their verbal skills. Their emotions run from peak to valley to peak, etc. They make snap decisions based more on intuition than facts. In conflict situations, they don't give in or run. They fight.

They'd be more effective if they focused on results, facts, possible consequences of their decisions, and follow through.

Helpers

Helpers build relationships and get along well with others. Appreciation keeps them going. They value peace and harmony. They rarely initiate. Relationships are more important than tasks. They're the best communicators of all temperaments because they listen as well as they talk. They're loyal. They're very resistant to change. They ask others for input before they

make decisions. In conflict situations, they give in. They're dependable, steady, and reliable. They're hard on themselves and often have a low self-image.

They'd be more effective if they cared less about what others think of them, didn't cave in during conflict, learned to say no to others' requests, and initiated more.

Perfectors

Perfectors love details and facts. They're thorough, accurate and insist on doing things right. They're extremely careful. They're solemn, thoughtful, and don't smile very much. They waste time trying to perfect what's already almost perfect. The quality of their work is high, but the quantity is somewhat limited by their slow, plodding trek toward perfection. They need a mountain of evidence before they make a decision. They listen well. They're very organized. They work hard and don't quit when the going gets tough. They avoid conflict. They're critical of themselves and others.

They'd be more effective if they emphasized doing right things as much as doing things right, made decisions before every possibility of error was eliminated, risked more, and worked harder on building relationships.

Your Ministry Role

My spiritual gifts:

My skills include:

My spiritual passion is:

My temperament is:

The ministries that appeal to me most after reading my church's job descriptions are:

The way to find the right ministry fit is to pray, experiment, and evaluate using the aforementioned five questions. No ministry mobilization process can guide you unfailingly to just the right ministry, but it can save you a lot of time by narrowing your choices. The sooner you get started, the sooner you'll find the ministry that rings your chimes. Pray! Experiment! Evaluate! You have the freedom to fail. If at first you don't succeed, you're just about average!

Ministry Placement and Support

Follow this sequence:

1. Write job descriptions for all ministries.
2. Help individuals identify their spiritual gifts, skills, and temperament.

3. Those seeking ministry placement should read all ministry job descriptions, pray for God's leading, and select their #1, #2 and #3 ministry choices from existing ministries or suggest a new ministry.
4. A ministry mobilizer uses the prioritized list and knowledge of ministry needs to place the individual in ministry. The ministry mobilizer needs to pray and seek God's wisdom. The #2 or #3 priority might be the place to start if the #1 choice (teaching fourth grade Sunday school) has no need at present because a competent teacher is already in place. Another option might be assigning the individual to serve as an apprentice to the fourth grade teacher.
5. Develop those who minister by apprenticeship, coaching, mentoring, and leadership training.

Example: Joe Smith is Bill Brown's coach to help him become a more effective teacher. Joe helps Bill plant his garden and seal his driveway and in the process develops a much closer relationship. Joe sits in on several classes Bill teaches and concludes that Bill's lesson content is excellent, but his application of scriptural principles to daily life is decidedly weak. Bill agrees that he spends little effort on application and isn't sure how to do a better job. He sets a goal that at least 50% of his Sunday school lesson time will be practical application of biblical principles found in the lessons. Joe suggests that Bill should listen to a series of video tapes by Pastor Rick Warren for practical suggestions about how he can emphasize application. He also refers him to *The Seven Laws of the Learner* video series by Bruce Wilkinson. Bill studies these resources and applies their principles. Joe sits in on two more classes and notices how much more the class members are excited about their Sunday school experience than they were before. He calculates that about 40% of lesson time is now spent on application. He congratulates Bill for his remarkably improved effectiveness and makes one small suggestion that could help Bill reach his 50% goal. Joe challenges Bill to become Tom Rolter's coach because Tom would also like to increase his teaching effectiveness.

6. Those who minister should meet with a ministry supervisor every year to evaluate using the aforementioned five questions. If the ministry is a good fit, they continue. If it isn't, they meet with a ministry mobilizer to be reassigned.
7. Affirm those who minister and demonstrate appreciation in concrete ways.
8. Celebrate ministry victories.

Chapter 8

Healthy Structures

Remember Your Purpose

Have you ever gone to the basement, kitchen, or garage to get something and forgotten what? I've not done that since probably, yesterday. Sometimes I operate on autopilot. Occasionally, half-awake in the morning, I catch myself unthinkingly aiming my foot-spray can under my armpit! Fortunately, I've not pushed the button yet! Forgetting our purpose isn't funny. The key question, "Are you a mission-driven or tradition-driven church?"

It makes a difference to Jesus. And he [Jesus] said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!" (Mark 7:9). We definitely don't want to be guilty of that.

God's command in Matthew 22:37-40 is to love him and our neighbor: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus commands us to make disciples of all nations. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age." In brief, we're to make more and better disciples. The two commandments in Matthew 22 and 28 are related. When we're making more and better disciples, we're loving God and our neighbor.

Christian Schwarz discovered that tradition-driven churches are almost never healthy churches where worship attendance grows ten or more percent annually. He found that only liberal theology has a stronger negative effect on a church's health and growth than being tradition-driven (*Natural Church Development*, p. 46). Are your eyes on the fields that are ripe and ready for harvest (John 4:35), or on how you've always done things? Being driven by what you did last year is like driving with a constant focus on the rear-view mirror. The backward look, without evaluation, rarely helps the church move forward.

Paul forgot what was behind and strained toward what was ahead (Philippians 3:13). When a champion miler runs, he doesn't dwell on whether he had the fastest time for the first lap around the track. Who cares? The only time that counts is the one recorded at the finish line. Paul didn't become preoccupied with his past. His goal was to hit life's finish line a winner. I'm sure you want to do the same!

It's easy to become preoccupied with church routines and think spiritual busyness pleases God. The parable of the talents in Matthew 25 should scare those of us who think all church work is equally commended. God expects a return on his investment in us.

Imagine the owner of an orchard will be away for an unspecified number of years. He gives you money and entrusts you with 300 nectarine trees. You don't know anything about raising nectarines. The first year you pray eight hours daily that God will watch over the crop. Now praying is necessary... but so is spraying. All prayer and no sweat produce rotten nectarines. The second year you recruit a group of cheerleaders who come once a week and cheer for the nectarine trees. They don't know any specific nectarine cheers, so they improvise... Grow, grow, grow, grow, grow! The trees aren't impressed, but the fungus is. It grows like never before. All the fruit rots before it ripens. By the third season, you're starting to panic. The boss could be back to check up on you anytime. You research how to grow nectarines and learn what sprays will solve the rot problem, how to use them and how often. You provide the right environment and the trees yield an abundant harvest.

Were the trees responsible for the rot problem? No! Fungus was. The tree's part is to produce nectarines; your part is to remove obstacles that prevent an abundant harvest of quality fruit. The structures you used to care for the trees (prayer alone and cheerleaders) weren't effective. You didn't manage the orchard wisely until the third year. Likewise, the productive potential God has placed into your church is enormous. Provide an environment that allows that potential to have its full effect.

Jesus wasn't just busy. He was about his father's business (Luke 2:49). He had only critical words for those who honored tradition above obedience.

Because many churches don't have a mission statement that drives them, they aren't channeling their resources toward a target. They're like a boat without a destination, blown by the wind of circumstances this way and that. Businesses that don't know their business go out of business. So do churches without a purpose. Some churches have a mission statement in everyone's copy of the constitution, but on nobody's mind. It's totally unconnected to the way they actually operate.

Develop Effective Structures

In mid-August 2006, my dad and I fished for smallmouth bass in the Susquehanna River near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Our goal was to catch and release as many bass as we could. We spent a lot of time planning and organizing. We structured our day to achieve our goal.

Some structures are more effective than others. We could've cast our lures while standing in our front yard, but a major problem came to our attention. The river was three miles away! We couldn't reach it with a class five hurricane helping us. There wasn't anything "wrong" with casting from our own yard. It certainly would've gotten the neighbors' attention and strange looks from those who drove by our house! It wouldn't have helped us reach our goal. As it turned out, we had to place our lures inches from the fish for them to strike on that August morning. If our lures are three miles away from the bass, we can cast, cast, cast, but are we really fishing for bass? Many churches hold a week or several days of "evangelistic services" which only members attend. Ever done that? Were you really fishing for men?

On that August day, we could've driven to the river and cast for bass while wading. That would've put us close to at least some fish. Certainly it would've been an improvement over casting from the yard, but our goal was to catch and release as many bass as possible. That meant we had to get our lures close to as many bass as we could that morning. Wade-fishing would've limited us to covering many fewer spots than we could from a boat. Moreover, the Susquehanna River is dangerous for those who wade because of its rapid depth changes. Also my ninety-three-year-old father would've vetoed the idea as one that arrived about fifty to sixty years too late! If we limit our evangelistic outreach to the services we hold within the walls of the bethel, we're "wading" when we could be using a boat.

We organized for success. We loaded our fishing rods, reels, and tackle and other necessary equipment into the car. We hooked the car to our boat trailer and drove to a local ramp. We loaded the equipment into and launched the boat. We started the outboard motor and

traveled to fishing spots as far as two miles from the ramp. We experimented with lure types, colors, and retrieve speeds. We fished deep and shallow water. We fished near the surface, the bottom, and in-between. We cast our lures from a drifting boat and also trolled.

Most of the fish didn't cooperate. The few that did were in shallow, moving water near rock ridges. We almost had to hit them on the head with our lure. When we did, they attacked it immediately. Lure color wasn't important. There are a lot of variables in the structures needed to catch bass. Some days trolling produces far more fish than casting. Other days it's the reverse. Some days, fish will only strike a lure moving very slowly. Other days, they'll hit one traveling as fast as it can be reeled. The color of the lure can make a big difference. The line must be thick enough not to break easily and thin enough to not be too visible to the fish. The goal remains catching as many fish as possible, but the structures must be flexible. That's a parable for making more and better disciples as effectively as possible.

Definitions Determine Destination

Your core values, mission, and vision determine your spiritual influence and the size of your harvest. Beware of focusing on a part of your responsibility while ignoring other parts. Be patient. Don't rush to write your core values, mission, and vision on paper. What's far more important is that these three drive your ministry because they're written on your heart.

Bridgeton Valley Church of God's leaders' first draft of their mission statement was, "Our mission is to share the gospel with everyone in Bridgeton Valley." Then they wondered, "Isn't there more to it than that? Don't persons who come to Christ by our sharing need to grow in their faith and become an active part of a church family?" After considering these questions, their second draft stated: "Our mission is to share the gospel with everyone in Bridgeton Valley and develop believers into disciples of Christ." That was much better than the first draft, but they didn't stop there.

Some of their leaders had been reading the Apostle Paul's letter to Timothy that talked about spiritual multiplication. "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Timothy 2:2). They decided to apply this multiplication principle to many areas of church life. Their third draft read, "Our mission is to turn self-centered persons into Jesus-centered disciples who multiply evangelists, teachers, workers, disciples, small groups, leaders and churches in Bridgeton Valley." They decided to be a reproducing church! Evangelists, teachers, workers, disciples, small groups, leaders, and the church itself would all reproduce after their kind. That's a significantly different destination than that envisioned in their first draft! Defining their desire to be a reproducing church doesn't guarantee they'll get there, but not defining that as a goal will assure they won't.

Identify Your Core Values

Core values should grow out of the soil of biblical principles. It isn't enough to say you value prayer. Non-Christian religions value it also. Paint a biblically-based sketch of the prayer

you're looking for in your congregation. "We value daily, disciplined, dependent, specific, continual, persevering, fervent, bold, balanced, believing prayer."

Make sure your core values penetrate the barrier people erect between church life and the rest of life. For example, a church can value the Bible as God's infallible, inspired word and defend it against all attempts to minimize its value. That's wonderful, but not necessarily transforming. Go a step farther—"We value the word of God as our most important authority in everyday decisions."

My suggestion is to consider the following core values: We value healthy small groups, leadership, relationships, spirituality, worship services, evangelism, ministry, and structures. Each of these should be defined. Doing so is a major purpose of this book. I include these because Christian Schwarz has demonstrated in *Natural Church Development* that all eight are consistently well-developed in healthy churches worldwide.

Define your church's core values.

Define Your Mission

Your mission statement defines your business. It identifies your "customers" and tells how you'll serve them. The Red Cross' mission is "to serve the most vulnerable." God has already spelled out your purpose in Matthew 22:37-39, Matthew 28:18-20, and John 17:18. Put this mission in your own words. Make it memorable.

A good mission statement is a brief, clear, achievable, inspiring definition of why you exist. It tells what you consider most important. Your mission statement is the bulls-eye on your ministry target. For example, "Our mission is to turn self-centered persons in [your town or area] into Jesus-centered disciples who reproduce after their kind."

Define your church's mission.

Define Your Vision

Vision makes a tremendous difference. In the spring of 2005, I shared a vision with a high school junior who was two months into her first season competing in throwing events. At the time, her best discus throw was ninety-five feet. I told her that if she practiced and built up her strength in the off-season, I could see her qualifying for the PIAA state championships in 2006 and possibly placing in the top eight. That vision motivated her to do specific exercises I suggested and work hard. The vision was more than just a dream. It included a strategy she could follow to qualify for the state championships. She placed second in the AA division discus throw in District III in 2006 (118' 6"), qualified for the state championships, and finished tenth there. An unanticipated benefit of her hard work was significant improvement in the javelin throw (even though she didn't practice it at all in the off-season) and a District III medal in that event as well. A coach's vision can spur athletes to maximum performance. The leaders' vision can similarly impact a congregation. Vision is to a church what gasoline is to a car.

Your vision is your church's unique image of a successful future. It gives meaning to Christian service. It motivates, challenges, and inspires your people to work together enthusiastically. Your mission rolls on the rails of your vision. Your vision describes your destination (mission) and transportation (how you'll get there). For example, "Our vision is to provide an atmosphere where self-centered persons in [our town or area] can become Jesus-centered disciples, who reproduce after their kind, through the influence of healthy small groups, leadership, relationships, spirituality, worship services, evangelism, ministries and structures."

Define your vision.

Promote Progress

If your church's worship attendance during the last ten years is steady or declining, you're probably organized to perpetuate the past. If "What did we do last year?" is frequently heard during planning sessions, you're driven by tradition rather than mission. Looking in your rear view mirror too long when you're driving can get you killed! Similarly, the backward-focused look into the rear view mirror of tradition will sooner or later kill your church.

Organization and structures can help or hurt your church's health. Effective organization doesn't guarantee spiritual fruit, but it enables more fruit than ineffective organization. You can't make a pepper plant grow by pulling the weeds growing around it, but not weeding it reduces its productivity.

You can't make the church grow. Only God can do that (Matthew 16:18). You can keep the church from growing by structures and organization that maintain ineffectiveness. Perhaps you've heard the story of the pastor on a plunging, out-of-control plane who was desperately implored to do something religious. He took an offering! God hasn't commissioned your church to do something religious. He expects you to use the gifts he's given to bear fruit for his kingdom (Matthew 25:14-30).

If your worship attendance has declined or remained steady for the last ten years, your organization and structures are probably part of the problem. Make sure your branches (ministries) are connected to the trunk (mission).

Pursue Efficiency and Effectiveness

My uncle was a celery farmer. The quantity of celery he harvested depended on his efficiency and effectiveness. He used specially designed equipment to plant, cultivate, water, harvest, and process celery for market. All this equipment increased his efficiency. From years of experience, he knew what celery needed at every stage of its development to produce a marketable product. He provided what it needed, when it needed it. He was effective. He didn't waste energy doing things that didn't make any difference in the harvest.

The quantity of kingdom fruit your church harvests depends on your effectiveness and efficiency. The more spiritual seeds you plant, the more you cultivate, the more you water, the

greater your harvest will be. What percentage of your resources as a church are directed by your structures and organization towards sowing, planting, watering, and harvesting versus other activities that don't expand the kingdom? That determines your effectiveness. Your efficiency is measured by the size of the harvest compared to the time, energy, and money you spend to achieve it. Improving your efficiency increases your harvest.

Healthy churches reproduce after their kind. They reproduce evangelists, teachers, workers, disciples, small groups, leaders, and often, other churches. Many persons who serve in diverse ministries develop others to carry on their ministry. They in turn develop others.

Incorporate multiplication into your church structures.

A Pigskin Parable

Your structures include your ministries, how they operate, and how they're connected to each other. Organizations with effective structures, whether athletic, corporate, or church related, have similar characteristics. Let me paint a picture of effective structures of a successful football program and help you apply it to improve the effectiveness of your church structures.

Go for the Goal

We cheer for football teams, not football groups. A team is a group with a goal. In the stained glass world, many groups don't have goals that strengthen the church. They just meet. That's a terrible waste of potential kingdom-building power! By contrast, a football team works hard and together, and its members pay a price to win. When they come out for football, they know they're signing up for pain. They might not break any bones, but smashing into other players at full speed hurts!

Successful teams share specific goals. Those goals could include winning a league, conference, district, state, national, or professional championship. In addition, players have personal goals, such as being a starter, or being named to an all-league, all-conference, all-state, all-American, or all-pro team. No successful football coach allows his players to be either goalless or driven by only individual goals. A team's goals tap the energy of its members and help it achieve its full potential.

Encourage every ministry to define specific goals that help achieve the church's mission and vision.

Develop Your Strategies

Strategies are the highways to your goals. In 2005, Penn State's football team had a goal of making it to the national championship game. Their strategy was to use a spread offense to take advantage of their players' talents. They didn't quite reach their goal, but they came very close.

Once goals are set, encourage every ministry to develop strategies to achieve them.

Develop Leadership

A football team needs a leader on the field. On offense, usually it's the quarterback. The leader's responsibility is to make crucial decisions, inspire the members of the team with confidence, and motivate them to work together. His job is to get his players in the zone, the end zone!

Coach ministry leaders to equip their teams to work together to reach their goals.

Any high school football team that wins most of its games year after year has an effective year-round program of strength development. Through weight training, senior players develop muscles in places that freshmen don't even have!

Starting high school or college quarterbacks eventually graduate (at least at some schools!). Some become injured and physically unable to play. That leaves a leadership vacuum unless coaches develop the leadership abilities of those who aren't yet starting players. Teams need continuity of effective leadership on the field to win more games than they lose season after season.

Create a process to develop the leadership abilities of small group members, with special attention given to the one who'll succeed the leader. See Chapter 2 for details.

Define Ministry Job Descriptions

Each position on a football team has its own job description. It varies depending on the offensive or defensive system the coach uses. Each player knows his role on every play and how it makes the whole play successful. Eleven persons of average ability who each carry out their role on a given play will outperform eleven above average guys who don't cooperate. Dazzling teams outperform individuals with dazzling skills. That's why the United States has trouble winning the world championship in basketball.

Define job descriptions for every ministry role. See the following example.

Ministry: Bread of Life

Ministry description: Newcomers are visited and given a gift of appreciation for having visited our church

Position: Bread of life visitor

Position description: Visit newcomers and present them with a loaf of bread and our thanks for having visited our church

Spiritual gifts: Helps, evangelism, encouragement

Responsible to: Fred Smith (939-5894)

Is church membership required? No

How this ministry helps achieve our vision: It's a vital part of assimilating new persons into our church.

Maturity level required: Adult

Passion required: Desire for new persons to come to know Jesus and become part of our fellowship.

Ministry target: Church visitors

Ministry location: The homes of visitors.

Schedule: Monday evenings

Commitment: 1 hour per week for 6 months

Temperament desired: Promoter or helper

Match Talent with Ministry Needs

Coaches don't assign players to various positions by a lottery drawing! They put each player where they think he has the most potential to help the team. A 6'7" player who weighs 325 pounds doesn't return kickoffs. That job goes to a swift, elusive 170-pounder with the ability to catch the ball and not fumble when tackled. How wisely coaches place players translates into many wins that might otherwise be losses.

Each ministry should mobilize its members to serve God in harmony with their spiritual passion, spiritual gifts, natural gifts, temperament, and life experiences. See Chapter 7 for details.

Develop Clear Communication Lines

Winning teams communicate effectively. The quarterback sometimes changes the play at the line of scrimmage to take advantage of the defensive alignment. Every player on offense needs to understand the change in plans and make appropriate adjustments. Otherwise, the newly called play won't work. Effective communication among members of a ministry team is essential for the team to function as a unit.

The defensive backfield, linebackers, and defensive linemen form three separate units. These groups must communicate with each other for the defense to play effectively. If a linebacker is blitzing on a play, the defensive backs need to know it because it affects how they'll play.

Likewise, your church's ministries need effective communication lines with each other. Each ministry should know the goals and strategies of all other ministries. This enables it to make decisions and plans and to develop strategies that will help rather than hurt other ministries.

Organize effective communication channels within and among ministries. Err on the side of over-communication. It's better to tell your spouse, "I love you!" ten times a week through spoken words, gifts, cards, acts of service, etc., than once a year with a mumble! Establish a system for ministries to communicate their goals and strategies to each other at least annually.

Organize Prayer Power

Many football teams have a group prayer before the game. This unifies and strengthens them as they prepare to enter the battle.

Prayer can be helpful to a football team, but it's essential for a church striving for healthy structures. Leaders in every ministry need the wisdom and power that come through prayer.

Equip leaders to develop needed prayer support within their own ministries.

Evaluate and Improve

Football teams pursue continuous improvement. Coaches evaluate their players by watching videos of the game, and then they make necessary adjustments. Without evaluation and correction, they're doomed to make the same mistakes play after play, game after game, year after year. Coaches also evaluate teams they'll play by watching videos of their games. By observing the strengths and weaknesses of these teams, they're able to adjust their game plan to give themselves the best chance to win.

Many declining churches continue ineffective ministries year after year without making any changes. Their ministries in 2005 differ little from those in 1985. They had no written goals in 1985, and they still don't. Without goals, there's no reference point for evaluation. These churches probably don't know what the needs of their community really are or which of them they're best able to meet. Without evaluation, ministries are as effective as they'll ever be, and that might not be very effective!

At least annually, every ministry should evaluate the effectiveness of its strategies in reaching its written goals and make necessary adjustments to those strategies to improve.

Construct a Path to Your Destination

I couldn't find the church! I had an appointment to meet with the pastor at a church I'd visited only once before. I thought I knew how to get there, so I didn't take a map. I needed that map in the worst way! I turned onto unfamiliar back road after back road. I fussed and fumed, but it didn't help! I had another appointment scheduled, so I ran out of time to find the church. With the embarrassment needle pegged to the high end of the gauge, I later called the pastor and apologized for missing the appointment. I didn't call him on my cell phone to get directions when I was lost because I didn't have one. Bad experiences can make good illustrations! That lost feeling is how many church folks feel as they navigate toward becoming more like Jesus with a sketchy map or no map at all showing them how to get there.

Your destination as a church is to make more and better disciples. You need a plan. You need a path! You need an easy to understand, clearly marked trail for new Christians to trek toward positions of spiritual leadership. Many churches don't have one. Sometimes there's a cow path here, an unconnected gravel section of road there, and another unconnected stretch of paved highway somewhere ahead. If new Christians have to hike alone for miles through unmarked woods and fields, many will get lost, never to be seen in the church again. Many others won't leave, but they'll never achieve their potential. You need a road that seekers can take to come to faith in Christ, be assimilated into the life of the church, grow in faith, become involved in ministry, and develop into spiritual leaders.

Inventory how much of that road is already in place, so you know what sections need to be designed and built.

Those who work with the disabled have barrier-free standards. Even some hiking trails meet such standards. Your church needs ministries that focus on every section of the upward-winding road—pre-evangelism, evangelism, assimilation, growth, ministry, leadership, missions, and church planting. Each of these is a bridge that empowers persons to move from one level of spiritual development to the next. Healthy churches organize themselves to guide believers along this upward-winding path.

Another option is to employ small groups that have each of these elements as components. In other words, pre-evangelism, evangelism, assimilation, spiritual growth, ministry, leadership development, and missions are parts of the overall ministry of each small group.

The path of Christian maturity produces both laborers for the harvest and leaders for ministries. You can't depend on laborers and leaders transferring to your church from other churches. Develop your own.

To make your organizational structures more effective, follow this sequence:

- 1. Define your core values.*
- 2. Define your mission.*
- 3. Define your vision*
- 4. Evaluate your ministries for coverage of the full discipleship path (pre-evangelism, evangelism, assimilation, growth, ministry placement, and leadership development).*
- 5. Create new ministries so you have at least one or two for each portion of the discipleship path.*
- 6. Challenge each ministry to organize its own prayer support.*
- 7. Write job descriptions for all ministry positions.*
- 8. Place persons in ministry based on their spiritual passion, gifts, temperament, and skills.*
- 9. Encourage each ministry to set three to four mission-centered, SMART goals per year, and develop strategies to achieve them. (To learn how to set SMART goals, see Chapter 12, Meeting 7 for details.)*
- 10. Establish clear communication lines among ministry leaders.*
- 11. Offer leadership training monthly and coaching to all leaders who desire it.*
- 12. Challenge ministries to evaluate their goals and strategies annually and make changes to improve their effectiveness.*
- 13. Discontinue unfruitful ministries and assign their members to more fruitful places of service.*
- 14. Multiply evangelists, disciples, leaders, small groups, and churches using apprenticeship.*

Evaluate How Healthy Your Structures Are

To evaluate the health of your church's structures, complete the Healthy Structures Underlying Issues Inventory in Appendix A.

Chapter 9

God's Wisdom Principles

Introduction

God's wisdom principles are threads woven into the tapestry of creation that provide efficient ways for every species to multiply after its own kind. The command to multiply after kind is directed toward the plant kingdom in Genesis 1:11-12, the animal kingdom in Genesis 1:20-24, and human beings in Genesis 1:28. God's wisdom principles are expressions of his

grace that enable plants, animals, and humans alike to obey the command to multiply after kind. Whenever God commands, he provides grace to obey.

In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus commanded the church to be fruitful and multiply after its own kind, that is, after Jesus' own kind:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Don't miss or too briefly consider God's ultimate goal for every church. We're to multiply after Jesus' own kind. How are we doing?

Multiplying after Jesus' own kind is the gold standard, the fruit we seek. Many churches mistakenly think bigger is always better. We think the largest church in the town, county, state, or denomination is surely worthy of the most praise. That isn't necessarily so. A fig tree that looked impressive from a distance but bore no fruit met an untimely end (Matthew 21:18-19). Big churches aren't always reproducing after Jesus' own kind.

A large church has the potential to bear more fruit than a small church, but is that actually happening? Is the large church bearing fruit *proportional to the resources it's consuming*? Every church is evaluated by the quality and amount of its fruit. What counts isn't so much how many people we have in our church, but what kind of people we have. How successfully are we multiplying after Jesus' own kind? How many people do we have that look like Jesus and serve him in ways that help others look like him too? A large church that isn't helping its members reproduce after Jesus' own kind in proportion to its resources is squandering the raw materials of kingdom building (the money, time, and talents of the people in its pews).

God's creatures use energy very efficiently. Wasting energy creates a much greater chance of failure to multiply after one's kind. God designed his creatures to maximize the amount of energy they accumulate while expending as little energy as possible. A muskellunge is a missile-shaped fish that ambushes its prey from hiding places in aquatic vegetation. It only has to swim a few feet to get its next meal. Walleyes feed at dawn and dusk when their uniquely designed eyes give them a sight advantage over their prey. Grizzly bears in Alaska prepare for winter by eating only the fattest parts of salmon so that their meals are as calorie dense as possible. Ground hogs hibernate over the winter and thereby minimize the energy they expend when their food supply is scarce. Every creature has its own story, but the theme is the same. God's creatures use energy efficiently to maximize their potential to multiply after their own kind.

We'll examine six of the wisdom principles God uses to maximize the chance of creatures reproducing after their own kind: mutual dependence, multiplication, resource harnessing, self-perpetuation, mutual cooperation, and fruitfulness. We'll study them in that order and apply them to building God's church. In nature these wisdom principles operate automatically. Plants and animals aren't consciously aware of any of them. Human beings are

different. We can choose to apply these principles in ways that maximize our ability to reproduce after Jesus' own kind.

Mutual Dependence

To maximize our ability to reproduce after Jesus' own kind, we must make decisions based on what's best for the long haul not the immediate future, considering how the decision affects other people, places and things.

Biblical Illustrations

1. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27:

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. ... Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. ... But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I do not need you!" ... But God has combined the members of the body ... so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

2. Israel wanted a king, but God warned of the long-term consequences of this choice (1 Samuel 8). Young men would be drafted into the king's army. People would become slave laborers. The king would steal the best of their crops, use their property as his own, and take a tenth of crops and flocks.

3. Paul's discussion about eating meat sacrificed to idols (1 Corinthians 8) teaches that Christians should consider the effects of their decisions on others so as not to cause a brother to fall.

4. Paul wrote that many persons died as a direct result of Adam's decision to eat the forbidden fruit (Romans 5:15). Billions of people have suffered because of that one act of disobedience.

5. The lack of faith of the ten spies who explored the land of Canaan resulted in Israel's wandering in the desert for forty years (Numbers 13-14).

Illustrations of Mutual Dependence

1. A quarterback's ability to complete a pass is affected by the interplay of how calm and relaxed he is, the weather conditions, how well his teammates block, how well his receivers can run their routes and catch, and the skill and strategy of the defense.

2. From 2000 through 2005, production of young smallmouth bass in the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania was below average because of high spring river levels and cool temperatures. Many fishermen complained in 2005 that bass fishing was worse than it had been in years. When fishing isn't good, business for tackle shops, guide services, and bait shops declines. Fishing

license sales suffer. Motels along the river have less business. The ripple effect spreads because of the interdependence of fishing success and many other businesses.

3. Many factors determine the long-term effects of a week of evangelistic services on the church's evangelistic ministry. Will this evangelistic thrust seek to meet the felt needs of people, or is it mostly tradition-driven? How will converts be followed up and assimilated? Is a small group ready for newcomers? Do we see evangelism as a one-week event? Will these services reinforce the misconceptions that people must come to our church to be saved or that evangelism is best done by professionals? Will these services use resources that could be used more effectively in need-oriented evangelism?

4. What kind of music is best for your church? It depends on whom you're trying to please. Your style won't please everyone. It'll attract some and repel others. Target the audience you're trying to reach (e.g., twenty-five- to forty-year-olds with children or senior citizens) and select a music style that appeals to that audience.

Case Study 1

At Tradition First Church of God, many members were unenthusiastic about God, the Bible, prayer, spending time with each other, church attendance, and ministering to others. Christianity was a joyless duty. They felt like they had to go to church on Sunday mornings, but they didn't have to like it. The church health team challenged small group leaders to help members become more passionate. One group leader encouraged each member to spend at least fifteen minutes daily in personal devotions. He reserved ten minutes of each group meeting for members to pair up and share for five minutes each what God had taught them in their personal devotions during the previous week. Other group leaders did similar things. People who hadn't been doing personal devotions before started because they knew they'd be asked about them at their group meeting. Slowly but surely, lives began to change. When their devotional life became regular and they experienced intimacy with God as never before, they wanted to continue. They found joy in God's presence. Instead of being driven by duty, they became enthusiastic about serving God, telling others what he was doing in their lives and attending their small group meeting and the worship service. They invited friends to the worship service and to their small group. The church experienced steady growth in both its small groups and its worship service.

What we do in one part of the church affects every other part of the church both short-and long-term. The church board of Tradition First gave Pastor Fireball permission to conduct a one-year experiment of using decision cards in their services. In addition to inviting people who were making a commitment to Christ to come to the altar at the conclusion of his sermon, the pastor asked all those in the congregation to fill out an attendance card, mark it with an A, B, C, or D, and place it in the offering plate at the end of the service. The A stood for already a Christian, the B for believing in Christ for the first time today, the C for considering making a commitment to Christ, and the D for never intending to commit themselves to Christ. Pastor Fireball discovered that many persons indicated a decision to follow Christ on a card but didn't get out of their seat and walk to the front of the church. This didn't bother him because he believed baptism was their public profession of faith.

The church's prayer coordinator organized prayer for those who were considering following Christ. Over time, with much prayer, many of them said "I do" to Jesus. These new believers were followed up and channeled into small groups that helped them grow in Christ. Many began to minister to others. A new joy and enthusiasm filled the members because of all the new believers, classes, and ministries. That first year Pastor Fireball used commitment cards, the number of commitments to Christ and baptisms were both three times what they'd been before he used the cards. About 75% of new believers acknowledged their commitment to follow Christ on decision cards alone.

Some of the members complained about the new practice. They didn't like filling out cards and felt anyone serious about following Christ should have the courage to stand up and go to the altar. That's what they'd done, and others could do it too. A few became so upset they began attending other churches where they didn't have to fill out cards. Pastor Fireball's decision to use decision cards didn't please everyone, but clearly the positive effects greatly outweighed the negative for the long-term health of Tradition First. At the end of the one-year experiment, the council unanimously approved continuing to use decision cards in the worship service.

Case Study 2

What we do in one part of the church affects every other part of the church both short- and long-term. Pastor Nositip's church, which had an average Sunday morning attendance of sixty, celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. They invited former members, friends, and neighbors to the celebration. They bought 120 folding chairs to seat the crowd they anticipated.

They scheduled the Old Time Gospel Singers. They spent \$10,000 to paint and thoroughly clean their bethel. They ordered gifts for 100 visitors. They had to borrow money from many of the members to meet these additional expenses.

The day of the celebration dawned cloudless. The 120 folding chairs weren't enough. The members were ecstatic. They couldn't remember the last time this many persons filled their church. Unfortunately, no one followed up with any of the visitors.

The following week the core people of the church who did all the work were exhausted and a little depressed after coming down from their emotional high the previous Sunday. They cancelled the church council meeting scheduled the day after the celebration because only three of nine persons showed up. Only forty-three attended the worship service the following Sunday. The church finances were in the red big time. The church didn't have enough money to pay Pastor Nositip's hospitalization expenses and requested help from the denomination.

Six months later, the church still couldn't pay back any of the borrowed money. Attendance steadily declined which caused additional financial woes. Many left the church. The pastor began looking for a "greener" church to pastor.

What you do in one part of the church affects every other part of the church both short- and long-term. Pastor Horizon's church also celebrated its anniversary. Members invited friends,

relatives, neighbors, and associates to attend. At the celebration service, all ministry leaders shared their vision, what God was doing in the church through their ministries and their goals for the next year. During prayer, they thanked God for what he'd done and trusted him to do even greater things in the future. These stories of what God was doing motivated and encouraged the members tremendously. They wanted to do more for Jesus than they'd ever done before. After the celebration service, they shared a potluck meal together.

Almost immediately, leaders saw their new visions beginning to be fulfilled. People who were formerly "pew potatoes" volunteered for ministries because they wanted to make a difference. More than a dozen persons joined existing ministries that interested them and thereby expanded the church's workforce.

Both the short-term and long-term results of the anniversary were very positive at Pastor Horizon's church. Pastor Nosetip's church purchased short-term results at the expense of its long-term health. Likewise, every decision your church leaders make affects every part of the church. Make decisions that are best for the long-term health and growth of the church. Before making an important decision, consider the probable effect it'll have on every ministry both short-term and long-term.

Personal Development in Mutual Dependence

"And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). Life has many interdependent parts which include:

1. Spiritual—Becoming more like Jesus.
2. Social—Learning how to relate to others effectively.
3. Family—Enjoying healthy relationships with kinfolk.
4. Intellectual—Expanding knowledge.
5. Emotional—Learning stability and self-control.
6. Physical—Strengthening the body.
7. Vocational—Contributing to society by your work.

Positive or negative events in any of these areas affect other areas positively or negatively. Persons who experience depressing problems at work often vent frustration at family. If the boss at work isn't happy with them, even their cat might suffer! Our life is like a pile of sticks we pick up for a child's game. Moving one without moving others is often difficult. We can't control which stick life experiences move. Sometimes they shake the stick that is under all the others.

In these seven areas of life, we all have strengths and weaknesses. In my early twenties, my social skills were very weak. Development in this area helped me become more effective spiritually. To be an effective pastor I had to learn how to relate to other people. In which area of life do you need to focus first? Set a specific, measurable, attainable, result-oriented, time-bound goal in that area. Improvements in that area will positively affect other areas.

You've been aware of this mutual dependence principle since childhood, even if you didn't call it that. As predictable as the sunrise, if your brother chose first, he always took the biggest homemade chocolate chip cookie. Getting it yourself wasn't an option. If Lewis was present when captains were picking people for their basketball teams, he'd always be picked before you. The challenge is to consistently discipline yourself to make decisions based on this principle. If you eat a second piece of that delicious cheesecake, what will be the long-term effect on your waistline? You build your church's future effectiveness with the bricks of today's decisions. If you consistently make decisions based on what's best for the long-term, you'll make much better decisions than if you don't.

Application

Step 1: List all your church's ministries including both those that function continuously (Sunday school) and those that operate for brief periods during the church year (VBS).

Step 2: Consider potential positive and negative long-term effects your decision, plan, or program will have on each ministry. For example, if we add another worship service, how will that impact VBS? How will it affect our women's ministry?

Step 3: Modify your decision, plan, or program to maximize long-term positive impact on each ministry.

Example

In a meeting of the nominating committee at Kingston Church of God, someone suggested Steve Sanders as a candidate for deacon. Steve, the Sunday school Superintendent, had the gifts of teaching and leadership. Under his direction, the Sunday school had grown 20% in the last three years while most Sunday school programs in area churches had declined at least that much in the same period. The nominating committee considered how Steve's nomination and possible election would affect his ability to carry out his Sunday school Superintendent responsibilities. If he resigned as Sunday school Superintendent, no one was qualified and trained to take his place. The Assistant Superintendent, Roy Singer, had great potential but not much experience. Weighing all these factors, the committee decided not to nominate Steve for deacon because, at the moment, the potential negative effect on the Sunday school was too great a risk.

Multiplication

To maximize our ability to reproduce after Jesus' own kind, we must multiply evangelists, members, leaders, workers, teachers, pastors, church planters, cell groups, Sunday school classes, prayer groups, ministries, activities, gifts, skills, etc.

Biblical Illustrations

"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Timothy 2:2).

“Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve—designated them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons” (Mark 3:13-15).

“I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (John 12:24).

The challenge to multiply every aspect of church life isn't some ivory tower concept. God has used multiplication from the very beginning. “God blessed them [creatures of the sea and the birds] and said, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number, and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth’” (Genesis 1:22). “God blessed them [human beings] and said to them, ‘Be fruitful, and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it...’” (Genesis 1:28). This principle governs how the natural world and healthy churches operate.

Illustrations of Multiplication

1. All animal and plant species reproduce after their kind. Under ideal conditions a bacterium can multiply every twenty minutes. It takes some humans more than forty years to reproduce.
2. Imagine putting 100 grains of rice on the first square of a chessboard. Then, add 100 more grains of rice to each additional square. When you're finished, you'll have 6400 grains of rice on the board. Now imagine putting one grain of rice on the first square of the board. Then multiply by two the number of grains of rice on each successive square. For example, the second square will have two grains, the third square four, the fourth will have eight, etc. How many grains of rice will you have on the sixty-fourth square alone? 1,844,670,000,000,000,000,000! The chessboard would be under a pile that covers all Pennsylvania with more than 2.5 miles of rice!
3. The Sunday school class led by Linda Morris with Sue Rollins as apprentice is expecting. The goal is to grow from eight to at least twelve in the next eighteen months and “have a baby.” The mother class will be led by Linda and the daughter by Sue. Each leader will recruit another apprentice and continue to multiply every eighteen months.
4. Bill Bright started Campus Crusade for Christ in 1951. By 2004, the staff had grown from the original two in California to 27,000 full-time staff and 226,000 trained volunteers in 190 countries around the world. Many of these leaders were developed on college campuses through the influence of Campus Crusade staff. Thousands more served as staff for a time and later in other full-time Christian ministries.
5. You can count the seeds in a pear, but not the pears in a seed. As your church grows, it can make the greatest contribution to God's kingdom by reproducing itself! Is your church multiplying churches now? If not, make plans to do so. If your church is small, but part of a denomination with other churches nearby, plan to cooperate with them to multiply. For example, if churches in the Eastern Regional Conference of the Churches of God, General Conference would work together in groups of three and plant a church every five years, the conference would be planting nine churches each year! What could happen will happen only if churches

meet with others in their area and develop a plan. The key is to multiply fruit bearing branches constantly.

6. Multiplication clearly produces greater growth than addition in the long-term, but it takes time to get going. In the beginning, progress can seem painfully slow. Growth by addition is more fruitful in the short-term. Because of this, many churches have a hard time being patient enough to begin and stick with multiplication. If you started multiplying ministries, leaders, evangelists, small groups, and churches ten months ago, you might not have much to show for it. If you started ten years ago and have persisted, your congregation is significantly healthier than it was a decade ago.

7. Healthy churches multiply their members, leaders, workers, teachers, pastors, church planters, cell groups, Sunday school classes, prayer groups, ministries, activities, gifts, skills, etc. Over the long-haul, the church grows much faster and stronger through multiplication than through mere addition. While your ministering members serve, they can train an apprentice on the job at the same time. Leaders model the process and make it happen. Write multiplication into your church's ministry job descriptions.

Case Study

Pastor Workhorse went door-to-door in his community asking the residents how he could pray for them and their family. If they were responsive, he started a Bible study with them. He used a simple discipleship course to teach those who accepted the Lord. He visited thirty homes every month. As a result, he continued to add two new members to the church every month.

One day, the church chairperson wondered how they could add two more new members each month. Pastor Workhorse promised to visit sixty homes every month instead of thirty. What would he do if he were asked to visit 120 homes each month? 240? 480?

Pastor Empower also used evangelistic prayer visitation. To make it more effective, he recruited two apprentices. They accompanied and observed him doing visitations. After several visits, they began to help him by praying for those who desired it. Finally, he observed while they did the prayer visitation. They learned quickly and were able to do visitation without him. Next, he recruited apprentices for them to train. They just imitated the way he trained them. Now three teams were regularly doing evangelistic prayer visitation while preparing others to expand the outreach even more. The result was six new members every month! The goal was to train enough teams to add twelve new members a month within the next two years.

Personal Development in Multiplication

To equip an apprentice: 1) You demonstrate a skill while another observes you. 2) You demonstrate while another helps. 3) Another demonstrates while you help. 4) Another demonstrates while you observe. 5) Another demonstrates while someone else observes.

What parts of your church could you multiply while strengthening your minimum factor? (Example: members, evangelists, leaders, workers, teachers, pastors, church planters, cell groups,

Sunday school classes, prayer groups, ministries, activities, gifts, skills, etc.). Whom could you apprentice to multiply the fruit of your personal life?

Application

Step 1: List your church's ministries (both regular, such as Sunday school, and occasional, such as VBS, Family Retreat, etc.)

Step 2: Use intentional multiplication to benefit each ministry or some part of each ministry.

Example

At Kingston Church of God, the Christian Education Commission decided to apply apprenticeship at multiple levels to multiply the number of classes it could offer. Steve Sanders, Sunday school Superintendent trained Roy Singer, the assistant, so Roy would be prepared to lead the Sunday school effectively. Teachers were encouraged and trained to select and develop an apprentice. The vision was for each class to multiply itself every two years.

Resource Harnessing

To maximize our ability to reproduce after Jesus' own kind we must harness the energy/resources of those who now support, resist, and ignore us.

Biblical Illustrations

1. Luke 22:24-26:

A dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them ... But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be ... like the one who serves."

Jesus used the negative energy of his disciples wanting to be the greatest as a springboard to teach the nature of Christian leadership.

2. Acts 17:17-23:

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols ... they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" ... "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious ... I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you." Paul used idolatry as an opportunity to preach the gospel.

3. In the early church, persecution (negative energy) scattered believers, yet the Christian faith expanded (Acts 8).

4. After Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, he became a leader in Egypt, and later provided food for his whole family during a great famine. He was able to say, "You intended to harm me,

but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Genesis 50:20).

5. God uses our trials to develop valuable qualities and greater maturity in us. “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4).

6. God allows troubles in our lives so that he can then comfort us, and we can comfort others. “Praise be to ... God ... who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3-6).

7. David harnessed the resources of his mighty men who served him faithfully (1 Chronicles 11:10ff.), and early Christian leaders harnessed the resources of believers to meet the needs of other believers (Acts 4:32).

8. The Apostle John described the believers at Laodicea as neither cold nor hot and sought to motivate them to turn from their self-satisfaction to live for the Lord (Revelation 3:14-18).

Illustrations of Resource Harnessing

1. Waves pound swimmers and boats, but surfers use the energy of the waves to their advantage.

2. When I was a middle school student, one day I was playing basketball at school during our lunch break. After I stole the ball several times from a player on the other team, he got mad and threw the ball at me as hard as he could. I was too close to him to have time to react. The ball bounced off my knee and right back into his face! The result wasn’t intentional on my part, but it certainly was a humorous way (to me) of harnessing negative energy!

3. The power of Hurricane Katrina’s wind and water caused billions of dollars’ worth of damage and left many homeless. Some unethical persons applied resource harnessing by illegally applying for and receiving government money they didn’t deserve.

4. Hybrid cars go a maximum distance while expending a minimal amount of energy. They increase fuel efficiency by recovering energy generated by braking and storing it in the battery, by sometimes shutting off the engine, by using advanced aerodynamics to reduce drag, and by using low-rolling resistance tires and lightweight materials.

5. Smallmouth bass use rocks in a river to their advantage by positioning themselves in the calm water on the downstream side of the rock. They wait for the current on both sides of the rock to wash minnows, crayfish, insects, etc., down to them. When a food item passes the rock, the bass darts from its ambush position and grabs it. It returns to the calm water to wait for its next meal. In this way, it gains a maximum amount of energy from its food while spending a minimum amount of energy to obtain it. This pattern is common throughout the animal kingdom.

6. It's often easier to get people to say "yes" to serving in VBS than many other areas of ministry. That's why VBS is a highlight in many churches. Someone might say "no" to teaching who's willing to say "yes" to helping with crafts, transportation, snacks, or cleanup.

7. Josh was an outgoing new believer in Bill's small group who loved to talk about Jesus to others. Carl, a reserved person in the group, was very well-grounded in evangelism know-how, but rarely did it. Bill, the group leader, asked Carl to go with Josh to share Jesus with Josh's brother, Jake, to answer questions that Josh couldn't. Bill was harnessing resources to expand God's kingdom.

Case Study 1

Pastor Jones decided his church would focus on praying for and sharing the gospel with family, relatives, neighbors, co-workers, and friends of church members. The church board agreed. There was little spiritual fruit to show in the early going, but members persisted in demonstrating caring, praying for those in their web of relationships, and looking for opportunities to share the gospel.

Meanwhile, Ross Sinclair, chairman of the church board, visited his family in Florida. While he was there, Campus Crusade showed the Jesus Film in a local church. Ross attended. Many accepted the Lord. Ross was very impressed!

When he returned home and shared his experience with Pastor Jones, he was almost frothing at the mouth and his eyes were saucer-like with excitement. He wanted to show the Jesus Film in the church as soon as possible just as they did in Florida. He was sure it would work. Many would be saved. It was fast and easy. He told the pastor that friendship evangelism takes too long. He was so excited about the film that he offered to pay all the expenses to show it. If you really believed in friendship evangelism, what would you do?

Pastor Jones praised God for the spiritual fruit Ross saw in Florida and asked him to consider how to use this tool in the best possible way in their own community. He asked if the neighborhood where his relatives live was just like their own. Ross said that it wasn't. He asked Ross how he thought they could attract people in their own community to see the film. Ross didn't know. Ross offered to contact the pastor back in Florida to see how they advertised the film. Pastor Jones suggested they might be able to get the film on DVD and show it in the homes of their extended family members. Ross thought this was a great idea and offered to pay for the DVDs. Pastor Jones asked if he was willing to lead a task group that would plan and carry out this ministry. Ross enthusiastically agreed. Pastor Jones harnessed Ross' enthusiasm, energy, and money and used it to further the church's emphasis on friendship evangelism.

Case Study 2

Good Christian Church of God held a well-attended pre-natal care class for pregnant mothers. Many received Christ as their Savior.

After two months, Christopher Critical expressed his dissatisfaction with the class because no one who attended it went to the worship service. There was no abiding fruit. The church decided to change directions and sponsor a gym night complete with aerobic classes, weightlifting, and basketball. All participants were given a tract. Although gym night drew a crowd, no one was saved.

Christopher wasn't happy, and he told Pastor Linconium what he'd observed. Pastor asked him for suggestions to address their problem. Christopher thought the church needed to follow-up immediately people who made decisions for Christ. Pastor challenged him to organize a follow-up team and visit all those who attended gym night within forty-eight hours after their visit. They offered to do Bible studies for those who were interested. Many studies began. Many accepted Christ and attended Good Christian Church of God. The church planted a daughter church for those who'd feel more comfortable in such a church than in an established one. Christopher was too busy to complain.

Personal Development in Resource Harnessing

Maximize the return you obtain from spending your resources (time, energy, abilities, facilities) by not wasting them on fruitless ministry or fighting with those with whom you should and could be cooperating. When you suggest a new direction for your church, some will support you, some will oppose you, and some won't care. Assuming the suggested change will provide real benefit to the congregation, I believe the response to it will follow a normal curve.

Even if your suggested change is brilliant beyond belief and its benefits are obvious as the sun, the first reaction of probably 15% of your leaders will be to oppose it. Ask God for wisdom to redirect their negative energy in a productive way. Apply change principle wisdom in your approach (See Chapter 10). You can often win resisters and those they influence if you wisely dialog with them about the suggested change while it's still being shaped.

What are the positive resources or ideas, and who are the supportive people from your church you could use to help fulfill your goals? Harness your supporters' resources and all positive momentum in the church. Enlist people who want to see the change happen to help make it happen. This will be about 15% of both your leadership and your congregation.

How can you motivate the uninvolved by connecting with their felt needs? Cast a captivating vision to inspire and motivate them to use their lives to make a difference. The vast majority of the congregation, about 70% won't care that much about the change unless it's obviously foolish, like moving the worship service to 3:00 a.m. Even if the suggested change will be very beneficial, you'll have to motivate the normally uninspired and uninvolved to share their resources to help make it happen.

Application

Step 1: List all your church's ministries including both those that function continuously (Sunday school) and those that operate for brief periods during the church year (VBS).

Step 2: Determine which ministries and influential persons have the most health, energy, enthusiasm and fruit. Make plans to harness that energy to benefit the whole church; for example, use their testimonies to motivate others.

Step 3: Identify which ministries or influential persons are most resistant to health-promoting change. Seek their input in molding the shape of the proposed change.

Step 4: Brainstorm how the church will benefit from the proposed change. Use these benefits to cast a compelling vision to motivate apathetic ministries and persons.

Example

Charleston City Church of God had outgrown its bethel. Three worship services each Sunday morning were at or near the maximum comfortable seating capacity of their sanctuary. There was no room to expand at that location. The elders believed the church should build a new sanctuary on a forty-acre plot on the edge of town. The issue was controversial. Max Noran opposed the move. He was president of the Golden-Agers and very influential among the retired people of the church.

Pastor Carter and the elders met with Max over lunch. They asked him to talk about his opposition to moving the church to the edge of town. Max shared how the old bethel was the only church he'd ever known. He was brought to the church as a baby, and seventy-two years later, it was still his church. He especially loved the stained glass windows. His grandfather donated one of them.

The pastor and the elders told Max they knew it would be very difficult to leave the bethel and all its memories behind. They also knew the size and location of the old bethel was limiting the number of people the church could influence for Christ. The new bethel would have a gym which Max's grandkids could enjoy. Its classrooms wouldn't be overcrowded like they were in the old bethel. There'd be plenty of room for parking. People would have to make some sacrifices to expand the church's ministry. It would cost a lot of money to build the new building and more to maintain it. Was not seeing more people influenced for Christ worth it? Max wouldn't have to leave the old stained glass windows behind. The leaders knew many in the congregation had a strong emotional connection to the windows. They planned to include them in the new bethel. They asked Max to pray about changing his opinion. The pastor would call him in a week and ask how the Lord had led. Max changed his mind and influenced many of the Golden-Agers to do the same.

Self-Perpetuation

To maximize our ability to reproduce after Jesus' own kind, we must use energy/resources in self-sustaining ways.

Suppose you own 10,000 acres of woodland. If you cut all the trees down at one time, you'll will be out of the wood business for years! If you cut only as many board feet as the land produces every year, your business is self-sustaining and can remain in the family for generations.

Biblical Illustrations

1. Jesus appointed twelve men that they might be with him (Mark 3:14). By watching and imitating him these few learned how to apply faith and obedience to all of life and taught others to do the same, who taught still others, etc., continually sustaining the Christian faith.

2. 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12: “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.” Persons who work to support themselves will be self-sustaining so those in the church or outside of it won’t have to support them.

3. “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18). Mature believers can pray all kinds of prayers in all kinds of situations without being dependent on the pastor or someone else to pray for these things.

Illustrations of Self-Perpetuation

1. Leaves that fall from a tree in the autumn, if not removed, decay, and the nutrients leach into the soil. The roots of the tree pick up some of these nutrients and use them to form more leaves in a future growing season.

2. Rabbits eat grass to derive nutrients that build and fuel their muscles so they have energy to eat more grass tomorrow, run from predators, and reproduce. Some of the energy goes to develop the eggs or sperm that combined will produce more rabbits to maintain the species year after year.

3. At the church’s monthly fellowship, adults provide food and feed it to babies. They also provide food for children who feed themselves, and they provide food for and feed themselves. Growing up includes moving from being provided for and fed to providing for and feeding yourself and others.

4. A hunter I know once killed two deer with one shot. It wasn’t intentional or legal, but it certainly was efficient! How can the “bullets” we fire today not only provide food for today, but for next week, next month, and next year? Make the most of every opportunity.

5. The last Sunday evening of the month Welch Corners Church of God holds a leadership training class to develop basic leadership skills in their leaders (active listening, time-management, people skills, leading meetings effectively, etc.). The church is intentional about developing its own leaders, so it doesn’t have to depend on leaders transferring to them from other churches.

6. Pastor Fred spent an average of eight hours a month in premarital counseling to build a foundation for healthy marriages. In January, he began to train Roger and Mary Rollins, a couple with a very healthy marriage, to take over premarital counseling. Roger and Mary sat in on

Pastor Fred's counseling for three months. The next three months they did the counseling together. The following three months Pastor Fred observed as they did the counseling. By the beginning of October Roger and Mary were equipped to do the counseling themselves. The beginning of the next year, Roger and Mary trained Bob and Judy, another couple with a healthy marriage, just as Pastor Fred had trained them. The result was that Pastor Fred was released from doing premarital counseling and could spend more time leading the church to accomplish its mission and vision.

7. Centerville Church of God plans an all-out celebration banquet every year in appreciation of the Christian service of its many volunteers. The church expresses appreciation in other ways as well. The pastor sends a personal card of appreciation with a handwritten note to each volunteer every year. In addition, ministry leaders meet every year one-on-one with those whose ministries they oversee to evaluate and express appreciation with a gift often related to the ministry. These sessions not only help volunteers to plan how they can be more effective, but they also motivate them because they know they're loved and appreciated.

8. Joe disciplined Bill in such a way that Bill learned how to share his faith, become grounded in it, and pass what he'd received on to Roger who does the same with Ralph, etc. The energy and resources expended by Joe in ministering to Bill expanded the discipleship ministry of the church because Bill learned how to enter and further expand the discipleship process.

Personal Development in Self-Perpetuation

Make the most of all you're doing in the present, while preparing for the future. While doing ministry, prepare to repeat or expand it. Determine what resources you need to help your ministry bear self-sustaining fruit. What tasks do you do frequently? What preparation can you make now that will help you the next time you have to do the same task? When you hold a seminar on spiritual gifts, for example, write down all you do to prepare. Keep this checklist for the next time you hold this seminar. As you teach, train an apprentice leader who can teach the seminar in the future. Tape the teaching, for future use.

Move each ministry toward self-sufficiency. This is in contrast to ministries that are always dependent on outside financial, manpower, or material resources. For example, when calling in an outside expert to do evangelism training, ask him/her to leave easy-to-use, reproducible teaching materials and to empower one of your members to handle this training in the future.

Last quarter, Linda spent four hours a week preparing to teach an elective Sunday school class on Biblical stewardship. The class members greatly benefited, as did the church. Giving from members in the class increased an average of 35%. Pastor Williams suggested Linda should teach the class three times every year in their large church and take a break for one quarter. How would this approach apply the principle of self-perpetuation? How could Linda increase the pool of persons who could teach this class and also offer it in other settings such as small groups that meet in homes?

Application

Step 1: List all your church's ministries including both those that function continuously (Sunday school) and those that operate for brief periods during the church year (VBS).

Step 2: Train ministry leaders to develop the finances, leadership, vision, goals and strategies they need to expand and multiply year after year.

Example

Linda Morris' Sunday school class desired to be self-sustaining so the Christian Education Department of Speecetown Church of God could use its resources to start new classes. The members of Linda's class bought their own study material, developed their own leadership, and generated the funds they needed for their outreach to divorced women. Some of these women joined the class and began to reach out to other divorced women. The materials the women used were reproducible, so the women they helped could use the same material to help other divorced women. As the goal of every new church plant is to become self-supporting and self-sustaining, so should that be the goal of every ministry in the church.

Mutual Cooperation

To strengthen your ability to reproduce after Jesus' own kind, help different ministries cooperate with one another in ways that'll increase the fruit of both. Be creative. Maximize win-win relationships with both new and long-standing ministries.

Biblical Illustration

1. 1 Corinthians 3:8: "The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor." When those who sow and those who cultivate work together, they see more fruit than either would alone.

2. Luke 10:1: "After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go." These disciples strengthened, supported, and encouraged each other and did together a better job than they would have individually.

3. Acts 13:2: "While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" Barnabas and Saul worked together to spread the gospel better than they could have separately.

4. Exodus 17:12: "When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset." Aaron and Hur supported Moses' arms enabling Israel to defeat the Amalekites. They accomplished more than three times what any one of them could do.

5. 2 Corinthians 8:13-14: "Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they

need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality.” The believers in Jerusalem and Corinth were to support one another.

6. 1 Corinthians 12:17-21:

If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I do not need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I do not need you!” The parts of the body cooperate to benefit the whole.

Illustrations of Mutual Cooperation

1. On Gulf Coast pastures, cattle egrets hitch rides on the backs of cows where they make easy prey of swarming insects.
2. Bees help pollinate flowers, and flowers supply bees with nectar.
3. Alfalfa and *S. Meliloti*, a species of soil bacteria that lives on the roots of alfalfa plants, cooperate. The bacteria transform atmospheric nitrogen into a form alfalfa can use for growth and the alfalfa provides a place for the bacteria to live.
4. Lichen results from a mutually beneficial relationship between algae and fungus.
5. Butterflies feed on the nectar of flowers. As they do, they pollinate the flowers, enabling them to produce seeds.
6. Each family member often has a favorite food. What one restaurant lacks, another one offers. The restaurants in a food court benefit from each other.
7. In South America, acacia trees produce a large thorn. The inside of the thorn is eaten by ants, providing the nutrients they need. The tree also produces small growths at the end of its twigs that feed the ants, providing them a balanced diet. In turn, the ants protect the acacia tree from any insects that might eat its leaves, or other plants that might rest on it.
8. Starting Monday, I'll walk three times a week, for thirty minutes, and use this time to meditate on God's word. As my body gets stronger, so will my spiritual life. As my spiritual life is strengthened, I'll want to take even better care of the Holy Spirit's temple. Both my body and my spiritual life will benefit.
9. Cell group leaders discuss sermon application during small group meetings which benefits the groups. Group leaders identify those in the group who are applying God's word to their lives and encourage and equip them to share their testimony as part of the sermon. This in turn strengthens the preaching.

10. The praise and worship leaders encourage members to take good care of the church property as an act of worship. As the members do this, the church property is kept in better condition than it had been and produces in turn a better environment for worship.

11. All discipleship ministries could train and mobilize those being discipled to share their faith with their family and friends. Doing so will make them stronger disciples. These disciples leading people to Christ strengthens the evangelistic impact of the church. Both evangelism and discipleship benefit.

12. Wilson Road Church of God plants a daughter church in Catrona Heights by hiving off forty persons who are committed to serving the Lord in this way. The mother church's faith is stretched and strengthened, and the new church receives resources from the mother church that enable it to grow and thrive.

13. The worship team at Stenton Church of God trains small group leaders in how to lead worship in their small groups effectively. The health of the small groups improves as their worship becomes more vital. They apply the lessons learned during the worship service which improves the worship atmosphere of the whole church and helps the worship team accomplish its goals.

14. Each family/person brings a hot or cold dish to the fellowship meal and all families share dishes with each other. Through cooperation, each person/family prepares only one dish but still enjoys a delicious, balanced diet.

Application

Step 1: List all your church's ministries including both those that function continuously (Sunday school) and those that operate for brief periods during the church year (VBS).

Step 2: Brainstorm how each ministry might be able to benefit from working together with other ministries. Consider them one at a time, for example, how Sunday school classes can cooperate with the worship team, men's ministry, women's ministry, youth ministry, etc. Some of these matches won't be able to work together to benefit both, but some will. Unless you consider all the options, you might overlook some key mutual cooperation possibilities.

Step 3: Connect the leaders of ministries that you think could benefit from a cooperative relationship to determine whether they can work together, and, if so, how.

Example

Every month the Aged to Near Perfection Class from Marblehead Church of God conducts a worship service at nearby Rolling Meadows Retirement Center. The elders of the church suggest to Bill Park, the leader of the Aged to Near Perfection Class, and Ronnie and Sandy Spertok, the youth leaders, that the youth group and Bill's class might be able to work together to do this worship service. These leaders meet to talk about the possibilities. They leave the meeting very excited. At the next worship service at the retirement center the kids lead the singing, sing together for special music, and serve as greeters both before and after the service. The seniors are responsible for the message and the prayers. The seniors and youth group both

leave the service feeling they've touched the people at the retirement center, and they have! It was the best service they've had in a long time!

Fruitfulness

To maximize our ability to reproduce after Jesus' own kind, we choose and shape our ministries to bear as much fruit as possible.

All ministries in the church should set goals that define the fruit they seek to bear. They should regularly evaluate how well they're achieving those goals and make necessary adjustments to become more effective. Church resources are too scarce and life too short to waste them on ministries that aren't bearing fruit.

Biblical Illustrations

1. "He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful" (John 15:2). God expects fruitfulness.
2. All living things bear fruit. "Every good tree bears good fruit. You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16-20). You'll know the health of your ministries by the fruit they bear.
3. "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (John 15:8). Healthy ministries bear *much* fruit.
4. "So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and have not found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'" (Luke 13:7). Discontinue fruitless ministries with little potential to bear fruit. Direct persons in them toward other ministries that match their passion, gifts, temperament, and life experience. Of God's wisdom principles, this is the hardest to implement because it requires making hard decisions. It's easier to do nothing.
5. "Our people must ... devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may ... not live unproductive lives" (Titus 3:14). A fruitful life is devoted to doing good.
6. "If a man cleanses himself ... he will be ... useful to the Master" (2 Timothy 2:21). Life isn't about the pursuit of happiness. It's about the pursuit of usefulness to the Master.

Illustrations of Fruitfulness

1. Fruit growers manage their trees very carefully to get maximum production of quality fruit. They prune dead or unfruitful branches from their trees every year.
2. Snakes shed their skin and crayfish their shells to make room to grow large enough to reproduce and produce as many eggs as possible.
3. Cicadas leave behind the shells of their old life as a nymph when they become adults, enabling them to fly and reproduce.

4. Members of the sunfish family make a nest on the bottom of the lake, stream, or river and lay their eggs there. The males protect the nest against all intruders.
5. Ducks protecting a nest will leave it if a predator comes close and act as if they're wounded to lead the predator away from the nest.
6. A CNN.com posting on March 17, 2006, reported that scientists have identified and named 1.7 million plant and animal species to date and estimate there are 15 million species on earth. Every one reproduces after its own kind.
7. The Eastern Regional Conference's annual statistical report measures at least partially how much fruit each church has harvested in the last year. Many pastors don't look forward to filling it out. Self-evaluation can be painful. Resistance to self-evaluation and course correction is hazardous to your church's health. The most important ministry report is the one believers will give to God. Accountability helps pastors and churches prepare for the final exam.
8. The Abundant Life Sunday school class' goals are to grow from eight to at least twelve and to introduce at least two persons to Christ by December 31. They'll also develop a leader for a new class that'll form from the existing class on January 5.

Case Study

Pastor Event's church held a spiritual gifts seminar. The goal was: "By June 30 we'll train sixty of our members to identify their spiritual gifts." Many people attended. Sixty-two people discovered their spiritual gifts. They surpassed their goal. They were excited. Two months after the seminar nothing had been done to match these people with appropriate ministries. The spiritual gifts seminar stopped at training.

Pastor Rome's church held a spiritual gifts seminar. Their goal was: "By June 30 we'll mobilize forty members to use their spiritual gifts." Forty-two attended, enjoyed the training and discovered their spiritual gifts. They were excited. After the seminar, gift counselors helped them understand what ministries were appropriate for their spiritual gifts. Many accepted the challenge and signed up for ministry.

The church offered training for these forty-two persons new in ministry and held a dedication service for them as well. These new ministers were filled with joy as was the rest of the church. Pastor Rome's goal was mobilization, and the members were using their spiritual gifts. They were fruitful.

Steps to Become More Fruitful

Step 1: List your church's ministries.

For example:

1) Sunday school 2) Worship service 3) Sunday evening service 4) Bible study groups 5) Midweek service 6) Membership class 5) Baptism class 6) Evangelism training 7) Men's group 8) Women's ministry 9) Youth meeting 10) Food bank ministry

Step 2: Write a short, specific measurable goal that measures quality for each ministry.

Sunday school—At least 65% of those who attended last week's class will be able to share next Sunday how they applied it.

Worship service—At least 50% of those who attended last week's worship service will be able to share next Sunday how they applied last week's sermon.

Sunday evening service—At least 20% of those present will share how God has recently made a difference in their lives.

Midweek service—At least 75% will pray aloud each week when we break into groups of four.

Small groups—At each meeting, each group will seek to be holistic by spending 20% of its time in prayer and sharing, 20% in worship, 20% on Bible content, 20% on sharing what the Lord has taught them in their daily devotions during the previous week, and 20% on outreach plans and outreach accountability.

Step 3: Plan how you'll evaluate whether you've achieved your intended results.

Sunday school—Several times each quarter, each Sunday school teacher will ask each person present to write down anonymously how he/she applied last week's lesson. The teacher will collect the papers and calculate the percentage that applied the lesson by dividing the number who applied it by the total number present and multiplying by 100 (for example, four applied, divided by eight present, multiplied by 100) = 50%.

Worship service—Several times each quarter, the worship leader will randomly select thirty persons and ask them to write down briefly and anonymously how they applied last week's sermon. The goal is for 50% or more to be able to do so.

Sunday evening—An usher will count those present at least once each month and those who verbalize how God has recently made a difference in their lives to determine if at least 20% have shared (number giving testimony, divided by total number present, multiplied by 100, equals percent who shared).

Midweek service—The leader of each prayer group of four will write down on the prayer guide sheet once each month how many in the group prayed aloud and give the sheet to an usher at the end of the service.

Small groups—Each group leader will log the number of minutes spent on each of these five segments every meeting and report this information to the Small Groups Coordinator every quarter.

Step 4: Evaluate at least once per year

All the examples include evaluation at least several times each quarter.

Step 5: Make necessary adjustments to your ministries

Sunday school—The initial evaluation reveals no more than 5% applied the lesson in any lecture class. In the discussion classes, an average of 55% applied it. The Sunday school superintendent will share this information with the leaders of the lecture classes and work with them to move their classes from one-way to two-way communication.

Worship service—The first evaluation showed that 12% of the congregation is applying the sermon to their lives. The worship team will work with Pastor Roberts to increase the percentage of his sermon that is application. The goal is for the main points and at least 40% of each sermon to be application of the biblical text to life. Every week three laypersons selected at random will evaluate how relevant the sermon is to their life using a form designed by the worship committee. The worship committee will share the feedback in a monthly meeting with the pastor.

Sunday evening service—At the time of the first evaluation, only 5% of persons shared the difference God was making in their lives. The church began to hold a warm-up “praise huddle” for five minutes in the service when persons could share what God was doing in their lives in groups of four. The number of people who participated increased dramatically. Then one person from each huddle was asked to share a brief testimony. Participation held strong at 25% every service and different persons shared from week to week.

Midweek service—At first evaluation, an average of 1.5 of the four persons was praying aloud, which was only half the goal. The groups were instructed to use sentence prayers only and take turns praying. No person praying could express a prayer longer than two sentences in any one turn. They began each prayer time with thanksgiving—“Thank you, Lord, for...”—in which they were to respond with a single word. The next evaluation, participation was nearly 100% in every group.

Bible study groups—The first evaluation showed that the groups were spending 40% of their time on prayer and sharing and 40% on the lesson. Most of the groups were spending 5% or less of their time on planning or holding one another accountable for outreach and 5% or less on sharing how they’d applied God’s word to their lives in their daily devotions. About 10% of their time was spent worshipping God. The small group coordinator began to meet with the small group leaders once a month for training by modeling in their meeting the 20-20-20-20-20 balance they desired in each small group. The next evaluation held four months later showed dramatic improvement in the balance of each group.

Your Turn

Step 1: List your church’s ministries (both regular, such as evangelism, and occasional, such as VBS, family retreat, etc.).

Step 2: Write a short, specific measurable goal that measures quality for each ministry.

Step 3: Plan how you'll evaluate whether you've achieved your intended results.

Step 4: Evaluate at least once per year.

Step 5: Make necessary adjustments to your ministries.

Personal Development in Fruitfulness

As we become more fruitful personally, we'll contribute in a greater way to our church's health. Using our spiritual gifts contributes to our fruitfulness and joy. When we're in the wrong ministry or aren't bearing fruit, we'll be disappointed and our church will suffer.

In his book, *The Three Colors of Ministry* (pp. 56-63), Christian Schwarz suggests seven steps for discovering your spiritual gifts. They are:

1. Pray—

If you don't know your spiritual gifts, ask God to show you! Ask him to release and reveal all his gifts to you!

2. Be ready to use your gifts—

Spiritual gifts are imparted so you can minister to others and contribute to building the church. Are you willing?

3. Learn about spiritual gifts—

In *The Three Colors of Ministry* Christian Schwarz describes thirty gifts including artistic creativity (Exodus 31:1-11), craftsmanship (Exodus 30:22-31), giving (Romans 12:8), hospitality (1 Peter 4:9), knowledge (1 Corinthians 12:8), mercy (Romans 12:8), music (Nehemiah 12:46), organization (1 Corinthians 12:28), voluntary poverty (1 Corinthians 13:3), wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:8), apostle (Ephesians 4:11), counseling (Romans 12:8), evangelism (Ephesians 4:11), helps (1 Corinthians 12:28), leadership (Romans 12:8), missionary (Ephesians 3:6-8), service (Romans 12:7), shepherding (1 Peter 5:1-5), singleness (1 Corinthians 7:7-8), teaching (Romans 12:7), deliverance (Acts 16:16-18), discernment (1 Corinthians 12:10), faith (1 Corinthians 12:9), healing (1 Corinthians 12:9), interpretation (1 Corinthians 12:10), miracles (1 Corinthians 12:10), prayer (James 5:16-18), prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:3), suffering (1 Corinthians 13:1-3), and tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10).

4. Notice what you enjoy—

Using your gifts will bring you great joy! As you've served the Lord, which tasks have brought you the most joy? You may have been using your spiritual gifts in doing these tasks. Which spiritual gifts might correspond to these tasks that brought you great joy?

5. Experiment—

Perhaps you've already identified ministries you've enjoyed and the corresponding gifts. If you couldn't identify a gift, pick one you think you'd enjoy using. Experiment. Identify a task in the church where this gift could be used. You'll never know whether or not you have a gift if you don't try it! Give one another the freedom to fail. If at first you don't succeed, you're just about average!

6. Check for fruit—

Spiritual gifts are given to produce fruit. Checking your fruitfulness is an important step in discovering your gifts. If you have the gift of healing, people will be healed. If you have the gift of evangelism, people will be saved. If there's no fruit, you probably don't have that gift.

7. Get confirmation from others—

Other Christians who observe your ministry will be able to confirm your fruitfulness. Sometimes, others will voluntarily affirm which gifts they see operating. If no one volunteers information, ask a few mature Christians.

Resources:

Many good resources on spiritual gifts are available. Some recommended resources are:

- *The 3 Colors of Ministry* by Christian A. Schwarz
- *The Purpose-Driven Life* by Rick Warren, pgs. 225-278
- *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* by C. Peter Wagner
- *Finding Significance in the Church* (Call 717-652-0255 or email barb@ercog.org).

Chapter 10

Bringing Change to Church

Preparing for Change

Growing healthier requires change, but change isn't the goal. An athlete seeking to improve her form imitates those who have a more effective technique. She changes to become better. She'd also be changing if she imitated someone with inferior technique, but that wouldn't benefit her.

Church leaders face the challenge of introducing necessary, beneficial changes in ways they'll be accepted. The only humans who embrace change wholeheartedly are people receiving money back from a fifty-dollar-bill and infants with dirty diapers! The rest of us have to be persuaded of the benefits of change at least some of the time and probably most of the time. Often, we don't welcome even necessary change. We've forgotten that the church is God's charter bus for change. The goal is for all passengers on the trip to help each other become more like Jesus Christ in every way. That requires great change in everyone. Why do we view change as an enemy?

Applesauce makes pills go down easier. Let's consider some "applesauce principles" that make it easier for church folks to swallow change. They're adapted from *Leading Change* by John Kotter (Harvard Business School Press, 1996) and an article in *Christian Camp and Conference Journal*, written by Larry F. Johnston.

The Prayer Principle

You need the wisdom, discernment, insights, courage, and power that come through prayer. Changing the church is a spiritual battle. Don't attempt it unarmed, i.e., without prayer backing. You need prayer for wisdom to select the changes that'll benefit the church and when and how to introduce them.

Suggestion—*The Prayer-Saturated Church* by Cheryl Sacks (NavPress, 2004) is an excellent resource. Other suggestions:

1. Recruit a church prayer coordinator with a passion for prayer and organizational skills to direct the prayer effort and saturate every ministry with prayer.
2. Mobilize intercessors in your church to pray for greater church health.
3. Plan a special prayer meeting focused on the health of your church.
4. Pray and fast for the health of your church on a selected day each month.
5. Brainstorm and list various things that must happen for your church to become healthier. Publish these and challenge members to pray daily for them during a specified period.

The Unbalance Principle

Wrestlers have to unbalance their opponent to score points. A church at rest tends to stay at rest. A church that's making progress tends to continue to make progress. You have to apply energy to get the change process started. You can only steer a moving church.

Suggestion—The leadership could adopt a policy that any ministry that isn't bearing fruit (defined for each ministry separately) won't continue without significant changes in the way it operates. Leaders will channel church resources toward ministries that are making more and better disciples.

The "Why Now?" Principle

You have to convince church members why changes must be made *now*. If you can't, they won't change. If the roof is leaking and water is drip-drip-dripping on their heads, it's easy to make a case for a new roof!

Suggestion—If attendance has been declining for the last ten to twenty years, graph it, project future attendance, and present it to the congregation. Predict where the church is headed if nothing changes. Explain how a healthier church would benefit members, their children, grandchildren, friends, etc., the cost of doing nothing, and why *now* is the time to make necessary changes.

The MapQuest Principle

MapQuest marks out a route from your starting place to your requested destination. Leaders must communicate clearly where the church is going and how it'll get there. If the congregation can see a brighter, healthier future, it'll be far more motivated to make sacrifices to achieve it than if there's no such hope. Communicate an attractive, compelling picture of a healthier church often and in every nook and easily forgotten cupboard of church life.

Suggestion—Your vision includes your core values, your mission, and the shape of the ministries that'll accomplish your mission. Your vision is like an oak tree. For churches of 200 or fewer, three to four major ministry thrusts connected to the trunk (mission) is enough. Steps in developing your church's vision:

1. Define your core values [the roots of the tree] (the “what we'll fight for and won't compromise”). They're anchored in the soil of biblical principles. Consider these eight characteristics—We value *healthy* small groups (Hebrews 10:24-25), leadership (Ephesians 4:11-12), relationships (John 13:34-35), spirituality (Matthew 22:37), worship services (Psalm 122:1), evangelism (1 Corinthians 9:19-23), ministry (1 Peter 4:10), and structures (Ephesians 4:15-16) [as defined in Chapters 1-8].
2. Your mission statement [trunk] grows out of your core values. It defines your church's business. For example, Saddleback Valley Community Church's mission is “To bring people to Jesus and membership in his family, develop them to Christ-like maturity, and equip them for their ministry in the church and life mission in the world, in order to magnify God's name.” In general, your mission is to make more and better disciples.
3. Shape your structures and ministries [branches] to fulfill your mission.
 - a. Each of your three to four major ministries sets goals and strategies that help accomplish the mission.
 - b. Each ministry evaluates its fruitfulness and makes changes to become more effective.

The Big Cheese Principle

Before you go public with your plans to bring change, go private. Meet individually with influential persons in the church to get their input and support. If Harry Chairman or Ida Influencer doesn't support your novel idea to improve your church's effectiveness, it won't be accepted.

Suggestion—Meet over lunch or breakfast with each person who has significant influence in the church, whether on the governing board or not. Ask for and incorporate any suggestions that don't derail or significantly impair the proposed change. If their idea is as good as yours (or nearly as good!) use it. Several influential salespersons can sell a good product more readily than a single less influential person can sell a great one. Applying the Big Cheese Principle takes longer, but it greatly increases the likelihood the change will be accepted.

The Three Musketeers Principle

The Three Musketeers believed in, "All for one and one for all." Involve people in the change who'll be affected by the change.

Suggestion—Get feedback, suggestions, and input from those whom the change will affect before asking them to vote for or against it. Schedule a meeting to discuss the proposal and invite all who'll be affected by the change to come. People more readily accept proposed changes when they've had input in shaping them. A group of persons can generate more and better ideas than a single person. Applying this principle will make the proposed change more acceptable and better.

The Accountability Principle

You get what you expect and inspect.

Suggestion—In 1968, an older Christian challenged me to begin reading my Bible daily. The next time I saw him, he asked, "How's your Bible-reading going?" I was embarrassed. I didn't think he'd ask! I started daily reading and have continued the habit for more than thirty-eight years. It began because one person applied the Accountability Principle.

The Respectful Disagreement Principle

Don't let a few resistors block a needed change embraced by the vast majority.

Suggestion—Despite your efforts to enlist influencers, to include input from those affected by the change process, and to get everyone to agree, some won't. If you've prayed about the change and are convinced it's from God and now is the time, you must press on. Jesus commissioned the church to make disciples of all nations even though Judas dropped out. Make sure resistors know you've heard and understood their position, but respectfully agree to disagree and keep pushing the needed change.

The Rolling Boulder Principle

A boulder barreling down a mountain slope gains speed and momentum as it rolls. Momentum is your friend if your church is growing, but your enemy if you're declining. It's easier for a church that has grown the last ten years in a row to grow this year than for one that has declined ten years in a row to do the same.

Suggestions—Here's how to build positive momentum for change:

1. Build a winning streak even if it starts with celebrating a Sunday school class of two with perfect attendance!
2. Look for people who are already demonstrating the kind of behavior you're seeking, such as teachers who spend personal time with their students, persons who are mentoring others, etc., and praise them publicly. Be careful not to embarrass those who don't like public attention.
3. Leaders model the behavior they desire from others in the congregation.
4. Encourage small group leaders to discuss in their group how they can work together to build the health of the church.
5. Interview leaders of churches with spiritual momentum to see how they bring change to their church.
6. Plan a retreat for leaders or the whole church that includes extended times of prayer, worship, Bible study, fellowship, and personal time with the Lord. Leaders prepare the church for change by changing themselves as God leads.
7. Attend an inspiring Christian event such as Promise Keepers or Women of Faith.
8. Create colorful posters, banners, or other visual aids to promote church health.
9. After you set church health goals, achieve the easiest one first to build momentum for more difficult changes.
10. Pray, pray, pray!

The Busy Beaver Principle

A beaver through persistence can fell a large tree with many small bites. Changing the church significantly takes longer than you expect. Be willing to work at improving church health for at least three years before you begin to see noticeable improvement in worship attendance. It takes time for the word to spread that the church isn't the same. It takes time for its people to change so it isn't the same!

Suggestion—Reward persistence.

1. Maximize pastoral continuity. Long-term pastors don't guarantee a healthy church, but a series of short-term pastors guarantees an unhealthy one. Imagine how unhealthy kids would be if a different mom and dad moved in every couple years! People won't follow a pastor whom they know will soon be leaving.
2. If your church is in the NCD process, maximize church health team continuity. Challenge your church health team members to commit to serving for at least three years. It takes time to develop the know how to serve on the church health team effectively and help the church become healthier. Growing the church is like growing an oak, not a zucchini.
3. Encourage one another with Galatians 6:9: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

The Rubber Ball Principle

Bringing change to your church requires you to expend energy. Compress a rubber ball in your hand. When you remove pressure from the ball (or change pressure from the church), each

has a tendency to return to its original shape. Anchor changes firmly in your church's culture so they become "the new way of doing things." Don't conclude too early that the change has become part of the fabric of the church.

Suggestion—Maintain change pressure.

1. Enlist persons to share regularly through written or oral testimonies how the change is benefiting them.
2. Encourage leaders to "good mouth" the change among those they lead.
3. The pastor and key leaders keep emphasizing publicly why the change needs to be permanent.
4. Create structures to maintain the change. For example, if the church adds a contemporary worship service, develop structures that'll train worship team members to lead worship.

The Marching Band Principle

Your church's values, mission, structures, goals, and strategies must all move in step.

Suggestion—Explain:

1. Who'll oversee the change process.
2. What it'll accomplish.
3. When it'll occur.
4. Where church life will be affected.
5. Why it must happen now.
6. How it'll be introduced.

The Truck-Lane Principle

The heavier the load of change you haul up the hill of change resistance, the longer it takes to get to your destination.

Suggestion:

1. Evaluate and label the proposed change as small, medium, large, or extra-large.
2. When a medium or larger amount of change is needed, introduce it in bite-size pieces.
3. Judge whether the pace of change is correct by frequently consulting key persons in the congregation for feedback.
4. Begin with small, easily achieved changes that'll bring almost immediate benefits to the church.
5. Introduce more difficult changes only after you have positive change momentum.
6. You can accomplish less in one year and more in five than you think.

The Reward Principle

Recognize and reward behavior that promotes the change.

Suggestion—Suppose you're mentoring a teenager who isn't doing daily devotions. Your goal is to motivate her to spend personal time with God every day. Ask her to begin with Matthew 1 and to read one chapter a day at least five days each week, to write each day something she learned or could apply to her life, and to show you next week what she wrote down. Praise her for any insights she had into God's word and for her diligence in beginning this new habit even if she only did three days, because that's better than none.

Key Change Questions:

1. How will you organize prayer support for the change?
2. How will you unfreeze the church and move it in the right direction?
3. How strong is your case for making the change now?
4. How attractive is the picture of how the church will look once the change is in place, and how well are you communicating it?
5. How will you contact influencers and incorporate their suggestions into the change plan?
6. How will you get input concerning the change from those the change will affect?
7. How will you include accountability into achieving your change strategies?
8. How will you deal with those who refuse to embrace the change the majority accepts?
9. How will you build positive change momentum?
10. Will you persist if the change process takes twice as long as you project?
11. How will you ensure the change is fully incorporated?
12. How do your church's values, mission, structures, goals, and strategies all support the change?
13. Does the time scheduled to complete the change match the size of the change?
14. How will you recognize and reward behavior that promotes the change?

Appendix A

Underlying Issues Inventories

These inventories describe a church where leadership is empowering, ministry is gift-oriented, spirituality is passionate, structures are functional, worship is inspiring, small groups are holistic, evangelism is need-oriented, and relationships are loving.

Ask each person who took the NCD survey and influencers in the church who didn't to evaluate how well each statement describes your church with 1 = "not at all"; 2 = "somewhat"; 3 = "great extent"; 4 = "very great extent."

Identify underlying issues and blockers related to your minimum factor and boil these down to the three to five most significant blockers based on the areas of weakness consistently identified by those who complete the inventory. Once the inventories are completed, compile the average response by adding the total, for example, for statement 1 and dividing by the number of responses. If the total for the responses to statement 1 on forty inventories is 60, the average response is 1.5. The statements with the lowest averages suggest underlying issues you need to pay attention to now.

Healthy Small Groups

Evaluate how well each statement describes your small group with 1 = "not at all"; 2 = "somewhat"; 3 = "great extent"; 4 = "very great extent."

1. ___ The worship segment of our small group meeting regularly draws me into God's presence in a life-changing way.
2. ___ I feel really connected to the other persons in my group. I share areas of my life where I'm struggling and know they'll support and pray for me.
3. ___ My small group nurtures an atmosphere of love and acceptance.
4. ___ At least once each month I spend time with others in my small group outside regular meetings.
5. ___ I have a role in my small group based on my spiritual gifts, spiritual passion, temperament, and natural abilities.
6. ___ I find my role in my small group very fulfilling.
7. ___ My small group meets my needs.
8. ___ My small group leader has an apprentice who's obviously growing as a leader.
9. ___ I'm growing in my leadership ability as a result of my involvement in my small group.
10. ___ Through involvement in my small group, I'm growing in my ability to submit to Christ, to feed myself from God's word, and to pray.
11. ___ I look forward to the prayer portion of our small group meeting.
12. ___ At least 50% of the teaching portion of my small group is focused on life application.
13. ___ My small group has a mission statement, vision, and goals that define and direct its ministry.
14. ___ I'm more passionate about my relationship with God than I was a year ago because of the influence of my small group.
15. ___ My participation in my small group has prodded me to be honest with myself and others about my sins.
16. ___ Our small group members work together to serve others outside our group.
17. ___ Our small group has specific strategies to expand our group by reaching out to those in the church who aren't in a small group and to those outside any church fellowship.
18. ___ Our small group has a target date to multiply into two groups.
19. ___ Our small group carefully considers how its decisions and actions will affect others before making final decisions or taking action.
20. ___ I'm motivated to use my energy to serve the Lord through my small group.

21. ___ My small group does ministry in a way that enables us to continue and expand ministry in the future.
22. ___ My small group works together with other small groups in ways that benefit us all.
23. ___ My small group has a trained, quality leader.
24. ___ My church regularly does leadership training that benefits small group leaders.
25. ___ The members of my small group support and are accountable to one another.

Healthy Leadership

Ask all leaders in your church to evaluate how well each statement describes them (1 = “not at all”; 2 = “somewhat”; 3 = “great extent”; 4 = “very great extent”).

1. ___ I love God, my family, and those in need more than I did a year ago.
2. ___ I behave in a Christ-like way with both Christians and non-Christians.
3. ___ I study the Bible, read books on leadership and attend seminars to nurture my leadership ability.
4. ___ I’m well-fitted to, energized by, and passionate about my ministry.
5. ___ I spend at least 20% of my ministry time developing and equipping other leaders.
6. ___ I balance time spent with God, with others, and on tasks.
7. ___ I have a mentor or coach who helps me develop and holds me accountable.
8. ___ I’m a mentor or coach who helps others develop.
9. ___ I believe our church will minister to others more effectively in the future than it is right now.
10. ___ Fear or timidity doesn’t limit or stop me.
11. ___ God called me to lead in my area of ministry.
12. ___ I delegate tasks to develop others in ministry based on their gifts, passion, and personality.
13. ___ I love the people I serve.
14. ___ I introduce change to the church in a way that helps it to be accepted.
15. ___ I give others enough time to process change.
16. ___ I’m committed to “practice what I preach.”
17. ___ I share my weaknesses with those I’m mentoring or apprenticing.
18. ___ I clearly understand, am motivated by, and enthusiastic about God’s vision for my church and ministry.
19. ___ Our church’s calendar and budget demonstrate our commitment to our mission and vision.
20. ___ I get input from influencers in the church when I do ministry planning.
21. ___ My ministry has goals that help achieve its mission and vision.
22. ___ I demonstrate faith and confidence in God.
23. ___ I give others who minister freedom to fail and encouragement for trying.
24. ___ I identify potential leaders and move them toward increasingly responsible positions of leadership.
25. ___ I’m mentoring a new believer, a growing disciple, or a leader.
26. ___ I’m developing an apprentice to reproduce leadership for my ministry.
27. ___ I empower persons through coaching to set and achieve their ministry goals.
28. ___ I encourage and challenge others to try new areas of ministry.
29. ___ Our church is raising up the next generation of pastors, church planters, and missionaries.

30. ___ I attend regularly scheduled leadership training in my church that reinforces our vision, builds community, and develops my leadership skills.
31. ___ I interact with other leaders in our church at regular intervals.
32. ___ I use show-how, not just tell-how training.
33. ___ I've taken a temperament analysis test that's helped me understand my own strengths and weaknesses and how to relate to other temperament types.

Healthy Relationships

Evaluate how well each statement describes your church with 1 = "not at all"; 2 = "somewhat"; 3 = "great extent"; 4 = "very great extent."

1. ___ The leaders of my church love one another.
2. ___ We have a reputation in our community as a loving church.
3. ___ When someone in my small group has a need, I help meet it.
4. ___ I share my struggles and am supported in my small group.
5. ___ I don't avoid conflict. I speak the truth in love.
6. ___ Our church has special meetings and programs that make me feel loved (e.g., teacher appreciation, mother-daughter banquets, programs for graduates, etc.).
7. ___ I don't hold the sins of those who've hurt me against them.
8. ___ I'm a good listener.
9. ___ I often surprise others with thoughtful gifts.
10. ___ There's a lot of laughter in our church.
11. ___ I frequently meet with other members of my church socially outside of church meetings.
12. ___ I use my spiritual gifts in my ministry in the church.
13. ___ I show love for my unchurched friends, relatives, and neighbors by meeting their needs.
14. ___ I pray regularly for my spiritual leaders and know they pray regularly for me.
15. ___ I demonstrate love by mentoring someone else in my church.
16. ___ I use my natural talents and abilities to serve God.
17. ___ I tithe my time and finances to the Lord.
18. ___ I love God by obeying him completely, immediately and willingly.
19. ___ I visit those in my church who are hospitalized or homebound.
20. ___ Without complaining, I put up with other believers who irritate me.
21. ___ I honor others above myself.
22. ___ I confess my sins to others and pray for those who do the same to me.
23. ___ I pray for God to give me his love for those who are hard to love.
24. ___ I've worked through issues from my past that block my ability to give and receive love.
25. ___ I minister to others by giving, serving, caring, and trusting without expecting anything in return.
26. ___ I love God passionately.
27. ___ I take the initiative to reconcile broken relationships.
28. ___ My small group is like a family to me.
29. ___ What is said in my group stays in my group, and I don't pass it on to others.

30. ___ I go out of my way to make visitors in my church feel welcome.
31. ___ I consistently invite newcomers to be part of a small group.
32. ___ My church provides opportunities for me to move beyond superficial relationships.
33. ___ In my small group I experience unconditional love and acceptance.
34. ___ Our mission statement and vision value loving relationships and community.
35. ___ Our church helps newcomers develop relationships and use their gifts in the church.
36. ___ I publicly affirm and encourage others for their accomplishments.

Healthy Spirituality

Evaluate how well each statement describes your church with 1 = “not at all”; 2 = “somewhat”; 3 = “great extent”; 4 = “very great extent.”

1. ___ I feel great joy when I use my gifts to serve others.
2. ___ I’m filled with enthusiasm and zeal for God and his work.
3. ___ At church fellowship dinners people talk more about Jesus than themselves.
4. ___ Our leaders are spiritual examples to me.
5. ___ I look forward to my daily personal prayer time and my small group’s prayer time.
6. ___ My prayer life is balanced (praise, confession, thanksgiving, and making requests).
7. ___ I encourage others in my church far more than I criticize them.
8. ___ I’ve forgiven all who’ve offended me.
9. ___ I allot time daily to think about how Scripture applies to my life.
10. ___ I fast regularly to draw closer to the Lord.
11. ___ I daily write down my thoughts about God, his will, and his word.
12. ___ I’ve learned a lot by reading Christian books.
13. ___ I intentionally minimize my consumption of material things.
14. ___ I regularly spend time alone to reflect on God, my life, my world, and my relationships.
15. ___ I’m getting better at letting God control my life.
16. ___ Obeying God is my top priority.
17. ___ I regularly share my faith with unbelievers.
18. ___ I enjoy both worshipping God privately and together with other believers.
19. ___ I strive for moral purity.
20. ___ My relationships with others are peaceful.
21. ___ I’m patient with others’ quirks.
22. ___ My spiritual leaders pray for me.
23. ___ I’m captivated by my church’s mission and vision.
24. ___ I attend church retreats that challenge my spiritual life.
25. ___ I’m not satisfied with my level of spiritual maturity.
26. ___ I have an accountability partner or group.
27. ___ I confront those in our church who consistently disobey Christ’s commands.
28. ___ Faith guides my daily decisions.
29. ___ I frequently tell other believers what God is doing in my life.
30. ___ Jesus is Lord over my time, talents, and treasures.
31. ___ I pray for the lost by name regularly.
32. ___ I’m excited about what God is doing in my church.
33. ___ I expect God to do greater things through my church this year than last year.

34. ___ My church is free of significant conflict-caused tension.

Healthy Worship

Evaluate how well each statement describes your church with 1 = “not at all”; 2 = “somewhat”; 3 = “great extent”; 4 = “very great extent.”

1. ___ “Worship intercessors” pray for and during our services in a prayer room.
2. ___ I prepare for services by daily personal worship.
3. ___ Services aim at and fit a target group (e.g., Builders, Boomers, etc.).
4. ___ In the service I regularly meet God in a life-changing way.
5. ___ Our worship leaders model passionate worship.
6. ___ The worship opening helps me focus on God.
7. ___ Services have an obvious theme.
8. ___ Services move smoothly from one segment to another without wasting time.
9. ___ Services balance celebration and reflection.
10. ___ The sermons apply God’s word to life.
11. ___ The music inspires me.
12. ___ God is obviously present in our services.
13. ___ We use multiple worship services to reach more and different people.
14. ___ A worship team plans, organizes, and leads our services.
15. ___ Worship team members must meet spiritual requirements.
16. ___ Our worship team prays together before the service.
17. ___ Our team regularly evaluates all aspects of our service.
18. ___ Our services maximize lay participation and involvement.
19. ___ We train lay persons to make their involvement in worship service leadership fulfilling and effective.
20. ___ Need-oriented church ministries funnel persons into our worship service.
21. ___ Personal testimonies describe how God is working among us.
22. ___ Sermons are biblically based, clear, relevant and challenge us to action.
23. ___ We have a plan to make visitors feel welcome.
24. ___ We have a process to identify and minister to receptive persons.
25. ___ We provide social interaction opportunities before and after the services.
26. ___ Signs and greeters help visitors locate the sanctuary, nursery, Sunday school classrooms, and restrooms.
27. ___ Our nursery facilities are excellent, and our workers well-trained.
28. ___ Children feel included in our worship services.
29. ___ We have programs that excite our children and help them grow spiritually.
30. ___ We train our children’s ministry leaders well.
31. ___ We multiply workers to make the quality of our worship service self-sustaining.

Healthy Evangelism

Evaluate how well each statement describes your church with 1 = “not at all”; 2 = “somewhat”; 3 = “great extent”; 4 = “very great extent.”

1. ___ Our mission statement emphasizes evangelism.

2. ___ My pastor promotes evangelism at every opportunity.
3. ___ We see evangelism as a process that includes sowing, watering and harvesting.
4. ___ My church's special events appeal to the needs and interests of my unchurched friends and relatives.
5. ___ Our evangelism focuses on the webs of relationships of our members.
6. ___ I'm prepared to share my personal testimony.
7. ___ I share the gospel with and challenge unbelievers to receive Christ.
8. ___ My church meets my needs.
9. ___ I'm enthusiastic about my church.
10. ___ Prayer powers our evangelistic ministry.
11. ___ At least ten people greet newcomers within ten minutes of their arrival.
12. ___ We know our community's needs and have identified the ones we'll meet.
13. ___ We follow-up Vacation Bible School contacts.
14. ___ We visit new residents in our community.
15. ___ We use home surveys to contact the unchurched.
16. ___ We contact the unchurched using the mail.
17. ___ We use sports to reach the unchurched.
18. ___ We reach out to the unchurched elderly.
19. ___ We reach out to unchurched children and youth.
20. ___ We use small groups to do evangelism (e.g., Alpha groups).
21. ___ We use servant evangelism, prayer-walking, prayer evangelism, or compassion ministries to expose our members to unchurched persons.
22. ___ We free those with the gift of evangelism from other responsibilities to use their gift.
23. ___ We use Easter and Christmas services and special events to do evangelism.
24. ___ Persons frequently receive Christ during our worship services.
25. ___ We're talking about planting another church.
26. ___ We use people with different spiritual gifts working together to reach the harvest.
27. ___ We mobilize new believers to reach their pre-Christian friends.
28. ___ I pray daily for the salvation of my friends, relatives, neighbors, and associates.
29. ___ My small group holds me accountable to reach out to those in my web of relationships.
30. ___ My small group prays for the salvation of my pre-Christian friends and relatives.
31. ___ My small group sponsors social events that provide a welcoming atmosphere for seekers.
32. ___ Most small groups in my church do outreach.
33. ___ We direct new believers toward involvement in a small group.
34. ___ We help new believers find a ministry consistent with their gifts, passion, and temperament.
35. ___ We assign a spiritual mother or father to new believers.
36. ___ Our worship services are guest-friendly.
37. ___ We follow-up first-time visitors with at least a letter and a call.

Healthy Ministry

Evaluate how well each statement describes your church with 1 = "not at all"; 2 = "somewhat"; 3 = "great extent"; 4 = "very great extent."

1. ___ Our church regularly teaches on spiritual gifts in ways that help me understand and mobilize my gifts to build God's kingdom.
2. ___ The leaders of my church helped me identify my spiritual gifts.
3. ___ Our membership classes help people discover their spiritual gifts.
4. ___ My small group teaches about spiritual gifts.
5. ___ I know my primary spiritual gifts.
6. ___ I was connected to my ministry based on my spiritual gifts, skills, passion, and temperament.
7. ___ I use my skills and interests to build God's kingdom.
8. ___ I'm enthusiastic about my ministry.
9. ___ My ministry provides personal satisfaction and fulfillment.
10. ___ I often affirm and encourage the gifts I see in others.
11. ___ I can be myself in my ministry and don't have to act like someone I'm not.
12. ___ My ministry allows me to do what I'm passionate about.
13. ___ My church has written job descriptions for all its ministries.
14. ___ My church has at least 60 roles for every 100 persons.
15. ___ My church has identified pastoral and leadership responsibilities that could be delegated to others.
16. ___ My small group leader helps identify my gifts and equips me to use them.
17. ___ My small group is a safe place to use my gifts.
18. ___ My church has trained ministry consultants who connect people with the right ministry.
19. ___ We're open to new ministry suggestions by people with passion for those ministries.
20. ___ My church trains me for ministry through coaching, apprenticeship, or mentoring.
21. ___ Our process of assimilating new persons helps them discover their gifts and a place of ministry.
22. ___ I rarely feel like dropping out of my ministry because of dissatisfaction or burn-out.
23. ___ My church gives me freedom to fail in a ministry and then try another.
24. ___ I know how my ministry helps achieve our church's vision.
25. ___ My church demonstrates appreciation for my ministry either publicly or privately.

Healthy Structures

Evaluate how well each statement describes your church with 1 = "not at all"; 2 = "somewhat"; 3 = "great extent"; 4 = "very great extent."

1. ___ Most new people coming into our church feel wanted, stick with us, and find a place of service.
2. ___ I can list the core values of our church.
3. ___ My church's vision excites me and makes me want to help accomplish it.
4. ___ I can quote my church's mission statement.
5. ___ In our church we *don't* plan this year's programs based on what we did last year.
6. ___ I know how my ministry helps my church accomplish its mission.
7. ___ My ministry generates the resources (money, leadership, etc.) needed to develop and expand itself.
8. ___ The ministry in which I participate sets specific goals every year (e.g., 20% growth).

9. ___ My ministry targets a specific group (young married couples, senior adults, etc.).
10. ___ I know the needs I'm best qualified to meet.
11. ___ My ministry helps meet the needs of those outside our church.
12. ___ My ministry and other ministries in our church are interconnected and help each other.
13. ___ Some of our ministries prepare persons to be evangelized, some do evangelism, some assimilate new believers, some help believers grow toward maturity, some place people in ministries that fit them, and some develop leadership.
14. ___ My ministry has a clear job description that defines my job responsibilities and working relationships.
15. ___ I've seen a church organizational chart that shows who's responsible for each ministry and to whom he/she is accountable.
16. ___ My ministry evaluates itself every year and makes changes to become more effective.
17. ___ The strengths of those on the church council complement each other.
18. ___ Our church's leaders evaluate ministries and discontinue unproductive ones.
19. ___ My church leaders identify and affirm ministries that God is blessing and channel more resources to them.
20. ___ My church trains and coaches me to increase the fruitfulness of my ministry.
21. ___ My church designs our leadership structures to expand and reproduce.
22. ___ Our leaders have freedom to develop their ministries or to start new ministries.
23. ___ Our church has apprentice leaders at every level with new leaders entering ministry every year.
24. ___ The church has enough parking spots and seating capacity for its ministries.
25. ___ My church makes major and minor decisions efficiently.
26. ___ My church encourages creativity.

Appendix B

Small Group Covenant

The purposes of our group are to:

- Care for each other.
- Grow in Christ.
- Lead others to Christ.
- Serve others.

- Raise up leaders.
- Multiply the group.
- Evaluate and improve our effectiveness.

Our values:

- Small group meetings are a priority. I'll call my leader if I can't attend.
- I'll love others in the group unconditionally and pray for them regularly.
- I'll disclose my feelings, struggles, joys, and hurts as much as I can.
- I won't dominate discussions or offer unwanted advice.
- Whatever is said in the group is confidential.
- I'll support others in the group and be available to them between meetings.
- I'll assist the leader or host as needed.
- I'll do a service or mission project with the group every six months.
- I'm open to adding new people to the group.
- I expect our group to multiply within twelve to eighteen months.

With God's help, I agree to abide by these promises to God and our small group.

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix C

Connecting with God

Man's Original Condition

In the beginning, man lived in perfect harmony with God and carried out his will *flawlessly* (Genesis 1-2).

Sin Destroyed Perfect Harmony

Man and woman deliberately defied God's command and chose their own way (Genesis 3).

Sin Is Living for Myself

"We all, like sheep have gone astray, *each of us has turned to his own way*; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). Sin is a rebellious attitude against the Captain of our "ship."

Sin Is Universal

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Jesus is the moral measuring stick. *Every* person on earth falls short of *his* standard.

Because of Sin We're

Separated from God

"Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. *But your iniquities have separated you from your God*; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2).

Spiritually Dead

"As for you, *you were dead in your transgressions and sins*" (Ephesians 2:1).

Already Condemned

"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but *whoever does not believe stands condemned already* because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (John 3:18).

Jesus Christ Is God's Only Provision for Our Sin

Jesus Is God's Provision

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that *Christ died for our sins* according to the Scriptures, that *he was buried*, that *he was raised on the third day* according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

There Is No Other Way

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. *No one comes to the Father except through me*" (John 14:6).

Jesus Is the Only Way Back to Perfect Harmony with God.

We Receive God's Provision [Jesus] by Repentance and Faith

“‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!’” (Mark 1:15).

a. *Repentance* means turning from self-centered to God-centered living.

b. *Faith* means receiving Christ, God's provision for our sin.

1) To *believe* in Christ means to *receive* him.

2) “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12).

3) Revelation 3:20 pictures receiving Christ: “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him, and he with me.”

Only *you* can open the door of your life to Jesus Christ.

Opening the door means:

1. Being *willing* to follow Jesus instead of your own selfish desires [Repent]. God gives the desire and ability to obey.

2. *Believing* that God forgives you, *not* because of how good you are, but because Jesus paid 100% of the penalty for your sins on the cross [Believe the gospel].

Have you opened the door of your life to Jesus in this way?

You can through the following prayer:

Lord Jesus, Thank you for dying on the cross in my place and taking my sin, death, and judgment upon yourself. I open the door of my life to you. I want you to come into my life and take control. Thank you for forgiving my sins and making me a child of God. I want to be like you. Amen.

Does that prayer express your heart's desire? If it does, would you like to use it to invite Jesus to come into your life as your Forgiver and Leader?

The moment you open the door to Jesus, you receive his life. You're born again. You can *know* that Jesus came into your life. What does he promise he will do in Revelation 3:20 if you open the door? You can take Jesus at his word. Nothing is more certain! Don't expect a wonderful feeling inside. God honors *faith*. Don't depend on feelings. In 1 John 5:11-12 God promises eternal life to all who have Jesus, the Son.

If you have Jesus, you have eternal life. Take God's word for it!

Christian Growth Basics

1. Read the Bible daily. Begin with Matthew. Write briefly in a notebook what you've learned and will try to apply to your life (1 Peter 2:2).
2. Pray daily asking Jesus to control you and show you how to apply the Bible to your life to make you more like him. Pray about all your concerns (Philippians 4:6-7).
3. Every Sunday attend Sunday school and worship (Hebrews 10:24-25, Luke 4:16). Join a discipleship group in your church.
4. Share your time, talents, and treasures cheerfully. Jesus wants to serve others through you. Tell others how you received him and the difference he has made in your life.
5. Moment by moment yield to the control of the Holy Spirit of Christ who lives in you.

Appendix D

Worship Service Evaluation

Mark each statement as follows: 0 = "Very great extent"; 1 = "Great extent"; 2 = "Hardly"; 3 = "Not at all"

___ 1. The worship service was an inspiring experience.

- ___ 2. I enjoyed listening to the sermon.
- ___ 3. The service had a positive influence on me.
- ___ 4. The sermon spoke to my life needs.
- ___ 5. The music helped me worship God.
- ___ 6. Optimal care was given to children during the service.
- ___ 7. The worship service was interesting.
- ___ 8. The worship leader(s) led me into God's presence.
- ___ 9. I enjoy bringing visitors.
- ___ 10. In our services new faces are common.
- ___ 11. The service had a clear theme.
- ___ 12. The parts of the service were connected smoothly.
- ___ 13. The service was God-centered and Bible-based.
- ___ 14. I was challenged to respond to God in some way.
- ___ 15. Reflection and celebration were balanced.
- ___ 16. Many people were involved in leading the service.
- ___ 17. I sensed God's presence during the service.
- ___ 18. The service motivated me to live for God.

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