

CHURCH PLANTING AND DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

In Church Planting and Development we will be covering a myriad of topics and issues. We will deal with everything from The Call of God, Faith, aggressively taking the land that God has placed before us, church structure and organization, ethics in ministry, the church planting process, the pastor's relationship to the church, pastoral counseling, the pastor's personal life, the pastor's ministry and so much more.

The planting, growth and development of a church from beginning to end can be very complex, there's no way we can ever cover everything that is needed here. It is our hope to instill encouragement, boldness, courage and steadfastness to all who sense the call of God on their life to not only pastor a church, but potentially start one from scratch and experience the joy of watching it grow and develop into a force to be reckoned with.

We are living in a time of a weak and watered down gospel. There is a great need for uncompromising, doctrinally and Biblically sound churches in our day like never before. The Bible says, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers" (2 Timothy 4:2-3).

The Great Commission is still the preaching of the gospel and making disciples. We are commanded to, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). C. Peter Wagner said, "The most effective evangelistic method under heaven is planting new churches."

It is the church that is a force to be reckoned with in this world and against the powers of darkness. Jesus said, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). It's interesting that in both places where believers are given the authority to bind and loose it's in the context of the church. "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12).

Jesus told Peter, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). Again, it was in the context of the church that Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18). It's the church which has the power

to bind and loose.

The church is the city on the hill which cannot be hid. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14, 16). "To the intent that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known through the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:10-11).

Understanding the Call of God

The first requisite for the planting and development of a church or ministry is the calling of God. One must first and foremost be assured they are called by God into the ministry. Once they are convinced they are called into the ministry, they must be sure they are called into the specific ministry of planting, developing and growing a church. Therefore, the first thing we want to deal with here is "The Call of God."

Hebrews 5:4 says, "No man takes this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God." No one should even think of entering the ministry unless they are convinced they have been called of God. To enter the ministry without being called by God is to do an injustice to the church, the cause of Christ and one's self. If you are not absolutely sure of the call of God on your life to full time ministry, the best thing you can do is get a good profession, get behind a particular church or ministry and support it with everything you have.

The ministry can be full of joy and excitement and it can also be very difficult. Only those called of God will survive it and even at that there are those getting out of the ministry today at alarming numbers. The ministry should be entered into with great caution. The following are some reasons we should be sure God has called us before entering the ministry, whether it be as a pastor, evangelist, musician, missionary or any other form of ministry or church leadership. Once you decide to enter the ministry, there will be trials and difficulties. Here are three important challenges you will face, and ways you can obtain victory through them.

The Greater Judgment

The call to the ministry is both an honor (Hebrews 5:4) and a grave responsibility. According to James 3:1 those who have yielded to the call to preach and teach the Word of God will be held to a higher standard of judgment. This is why we must never take on this responsibility lightly. We must enter our calling with the understanding that God will hold us accountable for what we preach, teach and do. That is why it is so important we don't just preach what we hear from another, get our message from a book, or just throw something together.

We must "Study to show yourself (ourselves) approved, a workman that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). We are to equip ourselves through prayer, study (research), and meditation "As good stewards of the manifold grace of God", that when we speak, we do so "As the oracles (utterances) of God" (1 Peter 4:10-11).

In our day it is getting increasingly more difficult to minister the clear and unadulterated Word of God. Paul prophetically stated, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires" (2 Timothy 4:3).

I recently watched a Christian program that was interviewing ministers. There were many who were pastors of large churches saying people simply were not interested in hearing about the judgment of God or anything that was offensive. As a result, they chose to give them what they wanted. I was glad to hear R. C. Sproul say, we must not offend for the sake of offense, but we must also be careful not to take away the offense that is clearly in the Word of God.

Jesus often offended (John 6:60 and 66). This is why Paul charged Timothy and us who are called to preach to, "Preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering (patience) and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). Paul also said, "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who tries (examines) our hearts" (1 Thessalonians 2:4).

There is not only greater judgment before God but also before man. When you accept the call to follow the Lord in full time ministry you will find you are suddenly under man's scrutiny. People will criticize, condemn and talk about you for the least little thing. They don't like this or that; the way you did something or a decision you made. You will have to come to your own convictions and determine not to bend to man's every whim.

Remember, "Not as pleasing men but God which tries (examines) our hearts" (1 Thessalonians 2:4). Paul said, "For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). This must be our stand and yet with a heart of love for those to whom we minister, "Imparting not the gospel of God only but also our own souls because you (they) are dear unto us" (1 Thessalonians 2:8).

It is also important that we take great care not to offend if we can keep from it. James wrote, "If any man offend not in word the same is a perfect man" (James 3:2). We must not be offensive if we can help it. If we offend some one in our congregation and lose them, we have cut off all opportunity to minister into their life. Let's be careful not to offend unless truth or the vision God has given us is at stake. Our main purpose is first and foremost to please the Lord and then to encourage and grow our people in their faith.

The Spiritual Battle

We are all in a spiritual battle. The moment we get saved we are in a fight with spiritual wickedness in high places. The Bible says, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).

When you decide to get involved and let God use you to make an impact for His kingdom, you enter another level of spiritual conflict. When one yields to the call of God on their life to full time ministry, with a passion for doing the will of God at all cost, that is when you begin fighting the battle in the spiritual realm at the highest level. The powers of darkness are upset when you get saved and even more so when you decide to get off the sidelines to let God use you. When you surrender all your life to God’s service in a full time capacity, Satan is really ticked off.

I think of Moses, the moment he decided God was leading him to deliver the children of Israel from the bondage they were under, he immediately came under attack. Paul, shortly after his Damascus Road experience, began proclaiming Christ boldly and the battle started and never quit. Peter was so committed to the cause of Christ he was ready to go to prison and even die for Him (Luke 22:33). Though he fail short of his commitment, I believe he meant what he said and proved it years later by laying down his life for Christ. It was because of his commitment to following and being used of God that Jesus said, “Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31). If you have committed your life to His service, to doing the will of God for your life at all cost, Satan desires the same for you.

The good news is what Jesus said afterwards, “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and when you are converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). Let me encourage you. When you dedicate your life to the service of the Master you have the guarantee He is praying for you. “Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus” (Hebrews 6:20).

“Wherefore He is able also to save (deliver) them to the uttermost (completely and forever) that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). “Who is he that condemns, it is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us” (Romans 8:34). He’s praying for you as you fight the battle and you can be sure His prayers are answered.

So much so that even if you go through some failure as Peter, you can be sure Jesus’ prayers will see you through it to ultimate victory and He will continue to use you. Hear the words of Jesus, “When you are converted (have turned) strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22:32b). You

see, often we have to go through the battle and even failure before we are adequately equipped to do what Jesus has called us to do. It's only after we have been schooled in life's difficulties, by the Holy Spirit, that we are really ready to strengthen our brethren "With the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Discouragement

One of the greatest battles those in the ministry will ever fight is disappointment and discouragement. Nearly all God's prophets and ministers fought with this at times. Elijah said, "Lord they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine alters; and I am left alone, and they seek my life" (Romans 11:3 and 1 Kings 19:10, 14). After a great victory, Elijah fled from Jezebel and laid under a juniper tree and said, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers" (1 Kings 19:4).

After many battles and set backs on his second missionary journey, Paul fell into some discouragement after arriving at Corinth. Though discouraged, He continued ministering as we also must do. There will be times when you slip into the pit of despair and yet you must keep pressing on regardless of the way you feel. It may be from criticism, things not turning out or coming along as well as you had hoped (unfulfilled vision), personal problems, or failure but in the midst of it all the call of God never changes (Romans 11:29).

The devil's biggest job is to get us to give up but that is not an option. Jesus said, "No one having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). We must keep pressing on toward the purpose for which God has called us and the goal (vision) He has given us (Philippians 3:12-14).

Paul told the elders of Ephesus the Holy Spirit testified to him that in every city bonds and afflictions awaited him. After which he said, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, that I might finish my course (race) with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify of the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). God has a course for you. You must not let anything sway or detour you from that course. You must continue pursuing the course and ministry laid out for you.

When at Corinth God brought three things to Paul in order to encourage him and bring him out of his pit:

1. Friends (Acts 18:1-3).
2. Fruit (Acts 18:8).
3. Fresh vision or word from God (Acts 18:9-10).

I'm sure the friends and fruit helped Paul, but it just didn't seem to be enough. Sometimes we get so far down that not even great friends and fruitfulness in our ministry can bring us out of it – and God has to intervene. “The lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city” (Acts 18:9-10).

Though there will be times of discouragement in the ministry, God will do whatever is necessary to keep you on course. It may not be until you are in your darkest hour and nothing seems to help, but you can be sure God will speak to you bringing a word and freshness of vision that only He can bring.

Taking the Land

In Psalm 37 there are at least six references to taking, dwelling in or inheriting the land. Taking the land not only refers to Israel entering the promise land, but also believers entering into the fullness of all God has for them. Every promise in the Bible whether spiritual, physical, financial, or emotional. “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39). Are you ready to lay hold of all God has for you?

Verses for this study:

- “Dwell in the land” (Psalm 37:3).
- “They shall inherit the earth” (Psalm 37:9).
- “The meek shall inherit the earth” (Psalm 37:11).
- “Those blessed by Him shall inherit the earth” (Psalm 37:22).
- “The righteous shall inherit the land” (Psalm 37:29).
- “He shall exalt you to inherit the land” (Psalm 37:34).

In the first five verses of Psalm 37 we have several key words that teach us how to take the land God has for us. There are two things we should not do, and five things we should do if we are going to enter into all the fullness God has for us.

Don't be Anxious

Psalm 37:1 says, “Fret not.” Webster defines fret as “to cause emotional strain, be vexed or worried, an action of wearing away, agitation of mind.” When we are anxious or worry, we cause ourselves emotional strain and start to wear away spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically. In such a state, we greatly hinder our ability to take (inherit) the land God has for us.

In Numbers 13-14, Israel spent too much time fretting over the giants instead of God's power and ability to enable them to enter the land and experience victory over its inhabitants. How often do we do the same? We look at what's coming against us instead of God's power to overcome it. We think, “Am I going to make it? What am I going to do?” Pastors do this too.

Someone doesn't show up at church and we fret. Did I offend them? Did I make them mad? Consider the following encouraging verses:

- “Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).
- “So we may boldly say: The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me” (Hebrews 13:6)?
- “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (Timothy 1:7).
- “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6).
- In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus admonishes us at least five times not to worry or be anxious.

Don't be Envious

Psalm 37:1 also says, “Be not envious.” Envy and jealousy will destroy us. Proverbs 27:4 says, “Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?” Envy has destroyed both individuals and churches. “For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work” (James 3:16). Envy begins in the heart and from there flows out of the tongue. James 3:6 says, “The tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.” Envy plus the tongue equals division in a body of believers. It defiles the entire body.

It usually starts simply then escalates. Someone may have been promoted in the church or is blessed in a certain way and jealousy ensues. “Who do they think they are? I should have received that. Why them and not me?” It can also go something like, “What do you think about the decision the leaders made, I'm not sure I agree with what the pastor said, what do you think?” Let's crucify envy before it destroys us and the body of Christ (Romans 6:11). If someone is blessed, promoted or they get something we wanted, be happy for them. We are to “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep” (Romans 12:15). If someone is blessed, rejoice with them. The next person to be blessed might be you.

Trusting God

Psalm 37:3 says, “Trust in the LORD and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.” In Mark 1:16-20 the disciples left their lifestyle, family, friends, and career to follow Jesus. James and John “left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants to follow Him” (Mark 1:20). Their father had servants so they probably stood to inherit a very lucrative business.

Likewise, in Genesis 22 Abraham was willing to offer his only son trusting that God was “able to raise people even from the dead” (Hebrews 11:19). How much do we really trust God? Isaac was the promised child from which Abraham was to become a great nation. God often asks us to surrender the very thing He promised us to see if we will trust Him completely.

When Peter recognized Jesus walking on the water he was willing to get out of the boat, step into the water and walk to Jesus. Peter is frequently criticized for getting his eyes off of Jesus and sinking, but to his credit he was the only one who got out of the boat. I’d rather step out into the stormy waters of life and go where Jesus is than sit in the safe boat with the rest of the disciples. What about you?

God is looking for those who will trust Him and be willing to risk everything. They are the ones who will inherit the fullness of all God has for them. We must take the risk and at least try. That is faith. God may be speaking to you about something that frightens you. Fear is the opposite of faith. I’m not saying we should act foolishly, but we never know what we might miss out on if we refuse to step out in faith and try.

You may say, “What if it doesn’t work and I fail?” or “What if I step out in faith and sink?” What if it does work and you succeed? No matter what happens, there is one who will reach down and lift you up. Peter took his eyes off Jesus and started to sink, but when he called out to Him, Jesus lifted him up and Peter walked back to the boat with Jesus.

Doing Good

“Trust in the Lord and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness” (Psalm 37:3). Doing good has nothing to do with our salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 4:4-5), it is the fruit of our salvation. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). Doing good is a significant key to being able to take the land God has for us.

- “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14).
- “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).
- “For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Hebrews 6:10).
- “Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we (faint not) do not lose heart” Galatians 6:9).

According to Galatians 6:9 we will reap, inherit the land, and lay hold of all God has for us if we don't faint, give up or quit. The condition is that we do not give up or become fainthearted in doing good. There are a number of things in Galatians 6 we should do if we expect to inherit the land.

- **Restore.** “If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one” (Galatians 6:1). Restoration is the mandate of the church. It is the truly spiritual person who seeks to restore his fallen brother or sister and not condemn them. It's our job to put our arm around the fallen, help them up, and encourage them not to give up.
 - **Bear one another's burdens.** We must support people who are burdened down with problems and cares. We are told, “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2). Those of us who have gone through particular difficulties can support those who may be going through similar things (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). We can also assist our leaders who carry the load of the ministry, as well as those bearing financial burdens, etc.
 - **Share.** “Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches” (Galatians 6:6). We must share with those who are over us in the Lord, let them know what their work means to us, and how much it benefits us.
1. “If the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things” (Romans 15:27).

2. “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine” (1 Timothy 5:17).

The context here deals with finances (1 Timothy 5:18) and “double honor” refers to double the finances or salary. If our pastor is doing a good job, they should be making at least as much as the average salary of the congregation (1 Corinthians 9:1-14). Also, we should give our leaders gifts on special occasions such as birthdays, vacations, Christmas, and at times give them a special gift just to let them know how much we appreciate them.

- **Sow to the spirit.** If you want to take the land you must sow to the spirit. “He who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life” (Galatians 6:8). Spend time in prayer, study the Word, witness, and fellowship with other Christians.
- **Reach out.** “While we have opportunity, let us do good to all people” (Galatians 6:10). We must continue to reach out beyond ourselves. If we ever stop doing good to “all people” we will stop moving forward. Church leaders need to remember this. The church must be constantly reaching out to the world. The moment we focus inward we become stagnant. Let’s use our imagination and think of new ways to touch the world.
- **Support the church.** While reaching out to people we can’t forget “those who are of the household of the faith” (Galatians 6:10). Get involved. For example, teach a class, usher, clean the church, or be on the worship team. Do something to support your congregation.

Cultivate Faithfulness

“Trust in the Lord and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness” (Psalm 37:3). We must cultivate faithfulness within ourselves. The psalmist cried out, “Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases to be, For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men” (Psalm 12:1). Proverbs 20:6 says, “Who can find a faithful man?” And again, “A faithful man will abound with blessings” (Proverbs 28:20). Faithfulness is a key ingredient to laying hold of all God has for us (1 Corinthians 4:2, Luke 16:10-12, Ephesians 1:1, Ephesians 1:3, Matthew 25:29).

This can also refer to our feeding on God’s faithfulness. The New King James Version translates this “feed on His faithfulness.” Had the twelve spies in Numbers 13-14 spent their time feeding on God’s faithfulness instead of fretting over the challenge that was before them, Israel would have entered the promise land forty years earlier. Spend time meditating on scripture pertaining to God’s faithfulness (2 Timothy 2:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, 2

Thessalonians 3:3, Lamentations 3:22-23). Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your remembrance all the times God has been faithful in your life and begin to dwell on them. You will soon find your faith being renewed and even surging to new heights.

Delight in the Lord

Psalm 37:4 says, “Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart.” Delight not dread. Run to the Lord, not from Him. Develop a hunger and thirst for Him. “As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (Psalm 42:1-2).

Enjoy Him and His presence. “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him” (Psalms 34:8)! We shouldn’t dread spending time with Him in His Word and prayer but cherish it as Mary did (Luke 10:38-42). Many of us are like Martha and too busy “serving the Lord” to take time enjoying Jesus’ presence. (See also Psalm 119:103, Jeremiah 15:16).

Commit to the Lord

Psalm 37:5 says, “Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.” A couple may meet and enjoy each other’s presence, but the relationship will not continue without commitment. We may enjoy spending time with God in prayer, praise, His Word, and fellowship (church), but if we’re going to continue doing so it will take discipline and commitment.

Alexander the Great was on his final conquest. His scouts told him about one city he had to conquer if his conquest was to be successful. It was a small city and very fortified. It was built with high walls and surrounded by three cliffs approximately one hundred feet high. He left for the city with one hundred of his personal guards. Approaching the city, he demanded its immediate surrender. From the top of the wall, the king responded saying they were well fortified and had enough provision to withstand an attack for months if necessary.

Alexander said nothing but simply motioned to his guards. They immediately lined up single file toward one of the cliffs. He gave them a second signal and they started marching toward the cliff. One marched off the cliff to his death, then two, three, four, five, six and finally with one swoop of his hand, they stopped prior to the final one going off the cliff. Without saying a word, Alexander looked up at the king. The king came off the wall, opened the gate and surrendered. When asked why he surrendered, he said he knew there was no way he could

withstand an attack with such dedicated and committed soldiers.

What if the church had such dedicated and committed followers? Imagine what kind of fear it would strike in the powers of darkness. The impact it would make on our world would be phenomenal. God help us build such an army in these last days. Let's recommit ourselves to take the land God has set before us. God's promise to us is still "every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you" (Joshua 1:3).

Taking the Land: The Next Generation

Taking the land not only refers to Israel entering the promise land, but also believers entering into the fullness of all God has for them – spiritually, physically, financially, and emotionally. Moses was told to take the children of Israel into the promise land, but because of his sin he was only allowed to see the land from a distance and eventually died in the wilderness. Joshua, his disciple, was the one who would lead the children of Israel into the promise land. Joshua did what Moses was unable to do.

God is raising up a new generation of leaders and spiritual warriors. They will far surpass all that their predecessors accomplished. God was able to use Joshua because he had been faithful to Moses, his mentor and teacher. If you will be faithful in another man's ministry (Luke 16:12), God will raise you up to do great things for His glory. You will go far beyond what your mentor has done. Joshua 1 contains several key ingredients that will help us take the land.

Moses is Dead

“After the death of Moses” (Joshua 1:1) and “It came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun saying, Moses my servant is dead” (Joshua 1:1-2). The fact that Moses was dead was said twice because, as in the dreams of Pharaoh, the thing was sure. Below are a few lessons we can learn from this.

- **We must put a death to the past** (Isaiah 43:18-19, Philippians 3:13).
1. **Disappointments of the past.** Can you imagine the disappointments Joshua must have experienced not being able to enter the promise land forty years earlier? We must put a death to all of our disappointments of the past. If we don't they will hinder us in what God is calling us to in the future.
 2. **Failures of the past.** Joshua experienced failure forty years prior. We will have failures in this life, but we can't dwell on them. We must put our failures in the past and set our eyes on what God has for us in the future.
 3. **Bitterness.** I don't know about you, but I'd be a tad bit irritated with the men who brought back a bad report that kept me wondering in the wilderness for forty years (Numbers 13-14). The Bible says, “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled”

(Hebrews 12:15). “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice” (Ephesians 4:31).

4. **Achievements of the past.** We must also put a death to our past achievements. For example, the war stories we tell of what God did back in the day or the great things we have on our resume. The point is, what is God doing or desiring to do now? We must get our eyes off the past and on what God has for us in the future (Proverbs 29:18).
- **Security gone.** Joshua was Moses’ assistant. He ministered and did all that Moses told him to do. He had it pretty easy because Moses had all of the responsibility on his shoulders. With Moses gone suddenly all of the responsibility was on Joshua. He’d have to carry the load of the people and ministry himself. His security blanket had been ripped out from under him. He had to learn to lean on the Lord alone (Matthew 11:28-30).
- **The time for mourning is over.** Israel always set aside a time for mourning of the dead. They had mourned over Moses’ death. It was time to stop mourning and move on. Some of you have been in a state of grief and mourning. It may be over the loss of a loved one, some loss or tragedy in your life, or even sin. There is a time for mourning (Psalm 34:18, Psalm 51:17), but there is a time to lay aside your grief and move on. Your time of mourning is over.
- **Entering a new level of responsibility.** Joshua had been Moses’ servant, but now Moses was gone. All the responsibility for Israel’s future was now on him. Joshua would do what Moses was unable to – take Israel into the promise land. He now had to lean on the Lord Himself and let Him carry the burdens. He had to take responsibility for the task that was before them. Some of you have been following faithfully, but now it is time for you to take some areas of responsibility upon yourself. Don’t be afraid. It is time for you to lay hold of the task that is before you and let the Lord carry the load (Matthew 11:28-30).

God Spoke to Joshua

“It came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun saying...” (Joshua 1:1). God is still speaking today. Hearing from God is a must if we are going to take the land that God has set before us. If we are going to hear from Him, we must tune into His voice.

- **Develop a listening ear.** “Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, today if you will hear His voice” (Hebrews 3:7). Are you listening for His voice? We spend a lot of time talking to

God in prayer, but we must also spend time listening. In your prayer time, set apart a segment of it to be still before Him and listen (Psalm 46:10). Keep a pen and notepad with you and write down anything you hear from Him. You say, “But what if I don’t hear from Him correctly?” Practice makes perfect. You will probably not get everything right at first, but as you practice listening to His voice it will become clearer.

- **Church.** The believers of Antioch were in church when they heard from God concerning Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-2). They positioned themselves in the proper setting to hear from God. We must put first things first – be faithful in the little things (Luke 16:10). Start by being in church if you want to hear from God. If we can’t start there, God probably isn’t going to speak to us in our quiet time.
- **Worship.** When they heard from God, the Antioch believers were not only in church, but they were also actively involved in worshipping. It was as they “ministered to the Lord and fasted” that the Holy Spirit spoke (Acts 13:2). There is something about worship that makes it a major catalyst for the Holy Spirit to speak to His people. In 2 Kings 3 Elisha was requested to speak to the kings of Israel and Judah. He first requested a minstrel (musician) before he could hear the Word of the Lord (2 Kings 3:15). Worship is a powerful instrument in our preparation to hear from God. Never take lightly the function of worship in the house of God or personal worship.
- **Servant-hood.** Joshua was first Moses’ servant before God spoke to him (Joshua 1:1-2). Jesus said, “If you have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who will give you that which is your own” (Luke 16:12). Elisha served and followed Elijah faithfully before entering into his own ministry (1 Kings 19:19-21, 2 Kings 2).
- **Giving.** Jesus said, “If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon (money), who will commit to your trust true riches” (Luke 16:11). Malachi challenged God’s people about tithing, and when they failed to obey, God was silent 400 years until the coming of John the Baptist (Malachi 3:6-12). We cannot purchase God’s favor, but giving definitely opens us up to being able to hear from God.
- **Sacrifice.** “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said...” (Acts 13:2). The Antioch church was fasting, not of compulsion, but of free will. God was moved by their sacrifice and spoke to them. They sacrificed by fasting (seeking His will and heart), by sending out two of their primary leaders, and by supporting Paul and Barnabas’ first missionary journey. When God speaks to us, He often does so concerning sacrifice.

- **God's will.** Jesus said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). If we are not willing to do what God tells us to do, why should He continue to speak to us? "To everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away" (Matthew 25:29). If we do what He says, He will give us more. If we don't heed His words, He will stop speaking until we are ready to follow through in obedience. If we obey step one, He will give us step two, step three and so on. If not, He will stop at step one. Let's do whatever He tells us, no matter how great the sacrifice.

Crossing Over

"Now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them" (Joshua 1:2). God was commanding Israel to cross the Jordan into the promise land. The Jordan was what stood between them and the land God was giving them. What's standing between you and the fullness of all God has for you? Let me encourage you. You are about to cross over. There have been things standing in your way and you're going over. Now is your time.

It's a command. "Arise, cross this Jordan." It's not an option. God is commanding you now to cross over. "Arise!" It takes action on your part. Maybe you've been in a slump, wondering in the wilderness, and discouraged. You must hear the voice of God, take action and obey. This is your time. Get up, move forward and cross over all that has been standing in your way.

It will take faith on your part. It will be risky. The Jordan was in flood stage. The priests had to first step into the Jordan before the waters dried up so they could cross over (Joshua 3). You must take some risks in order to cross over what is standing between you and all God has for you. It may be frightening. What if you are overcome by the waters? You will have to step in, trusting God will dry up the waters. Step out in faith now, obey all that God is telling you and move forward into the land He has promised.

"As the soles of the feet of the priests shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap" (Joshua 3:13).

It was the spiritual leaders who risked all so the people could cross the Jordan. Likewise, it's the pastor who risks all for the church so its people can cross over into God's fullness. You must be willing to follow your pastor as he hears from God. Pastor, it's you who must lead in faith and step into the waters of your Jordan. Then you, the church, and your people will begin

moving forward into the land God has for you. In Joshua 1:3-5 God gives Joshua four promises. Claim these for yourself. They will encourage and strengthen you in the task God has set before you.

Taking the Land

“Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you” (Joshua 1:3). Every promise you read in God’s Word is yours. Everything you set your foot upon God has given you.

- **Faith.** This is yet future. “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). It takes faith and vision for the future to enter into all God has for you. “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). Perish can also be translated as being unrestrained or to run aimlessly. Clear vision shows us the direction we must go. Faith also denotes action.
 1. “Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:17).
 2. “The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Hebrews 4:2).
 3. You must have a vision for the future and act accordingly. “And Jesus seeing their faith...” (Mark 2:5).
 4. Jesus is moved when He sees His people’s faith in action.
- **Aggression.** The definition of aggression is “a forceful action or procedure, as an unprovoked attack, especially when intended to dominate or master” (Webster). The devil has been taking the aggression against God’s people far too long. It’s time we take the aggression against him. Jesus said, “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force” (Matthew 11:12). Let’s take what rightfully belongs to us. The word “place” in Joshua 1:3 in the Septuagint is “topos.” It’s the same word used in Ephesians 4:27 and the same place we get the word “topography” which is “used of a region or locality, room, of a place which a person or thing occupies” (Vine’s Expository). People who have made the greatest impact for God were aggressive.

1. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:13-15).
 2. Moses confronted Pharaoh to release God's people (Exodus 4-12).
 3. David went after Goliath (1 Samuel 17).
 4. Jesus sent the disciples out (Luke 10:1-20).
 5. The church is to take the aggression against the gates of hell (Matthew 16:13-19).
- **Moving forward.** When we stop moving forward we begin slipping backward. It's like driving up an icy incline in your vehicle. The moment you stop, you begin sliding backward. That's why we shouldn't focus on the past, but always have a forward vision (Isaiah 43:18-19, Philippians 3:13). There are four verses in the Bible that challenge us to press on.
 1. We are to press on to know the Lord (Hosea 6:3).
 2. We are to press on to lay hold of our purpose in Christ (Philippians 3:12)
 3. We are to press on to reaching for our goals, future reward, and the upward call of God (Philippians 3:13-14).
 4. We are to press on toward maturity in Christ (Hebrews 6:1).
 - **Claim.** "Every place the sole of your foot will tread upon..." denotes placing your foot upon something and staking your claim. We are to stake our claim, with faith and aggressive determination, on everything God has promised us.
 - **Preach the gospel.** If we want to aggressively move forward and take our land, we must be actively involved in preaching the gospel. Paul said we are to have our "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15). Again he said, "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Romans 1:15). Peter said, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). Let's set our feet in motion for "preparation of the gospel of peace."

Victory

“No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life” (Joshua 1:5). Joshua was promised victory and we are as well.

- “In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us” (Romans 8:37).
- “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).
- “Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).
- It was said of believers in the midst of the tribulation period that they “overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death” (Revelation 12:11). Let’s expect and claim the victory God has promised.

God’s Presence

“As I was with Moses, so I will be with you” (Joshua 1:5). God promised He would be with Joshua just like He was with Moses. God promises His presence will be with us no matter what we are going through. Jesus said, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20) and “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

Whether you feel His presence or not, He is there. We must stand on His Word that He is with us through our greatest battle – even when we feel farthest from Him. His Word is unalterable. Peter said, “Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8).

You Won't be Abandoned

“I will not leave you nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:5). You may have been forsaken by family, friends, and even the church, but He will never forsake you. “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). Most have felt forsaken at one time or another, but God will never abandon you!

How to Share the Gospel

The Bible makes it clear that every person must have an experience with Jesus through the Holy Spirit to be saved. If church planting, growth and development is going to be successful, the church must be involved in evangelism or soul winning. This is the most effective way to grow our churches. Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

There are only two destinations for those who leave this life and enter eternity:

1. Heaven

Jesus said, “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2-3). Heaven is a place where God is, where we will spend eternity reunited with Him in His presence.

To His good and faithful servant the Lord said, “Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matthew 25:23). Heaven is a place where, “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

2. Hell

Hell is where those who do not surrender to Christ are separated “from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). This is a place where they will be tormented day and night. Paul said, “In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction” (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). This is the same place prepared for the devil and his angels, “Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).

Hell was not prepared for mankind but for “the devil and his angels.” God made provision through the cross of Christ so that we would not have to go hell. “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18). It is not

God's will or desire for anyone to go to hell. Paul said, God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Peter said, the Lord is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

Jesus wants to come into people's lives as Lord and Savior, sitting on the throne of their heart. He said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20). Someone must share the gospel with them, giving them the opportunity to invite Jesus into their heart. Will you accept the call? Jesus said, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). If we are not fishing, we are not following Him. Please don't leave it to someone else to lead them to Christ, you may be their only hope.

How to Lead Someone to Christ

Start by asking them three simple questions which will allow you to find out where they stand in their relationship with Christ.

1. Ask permission. Say, "Do you mind if I ask you a question? If you died tonight where would you spend eternity?" If they say, "I don't know," share the plan of salvation below (Roman Road) with them. If they say "Yes," ask the next question to determine if their salvation is based upon Jesus' finished work on the cross.
2. Say, "If you stood before God and He asked, 'Why should I allow you into my heaven?' what would you say?" If they say something like, "Jesus is my Lord and Savior, Jesus is my only hope of salvation" or "I would tell God, because of Jesus" rejoice with them that they are saved. If they say something like "I'm a good person, I try to live a good life, I go to church," etc., proceed to the next question then share the gospel with them.
3. Ask, "Do you mind if I share a few scriptures with you?" As you share the gospel, don't elaborate too much. Get to the point.

Bookmark the first verse in your bible and let them read the following verses with you. In the margin of the first verse, write the reference to the second verse. Do this with each verse so you know where to go to next. Use whatever translation you like or are the most comfortable with. This gospel presentation is known as the "Roman Road."

The Roman Road

Romans 3:23: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Begin by showing them we have all sinned. Do not say, “See you are a sinner!” You don’t want to condemn them, but give them revelation and understanding of God’s Word.

Identify with them. Include yourself. Say something like, “The Bible says we have all sinned. I know I have, haven’t you?” If they say they have not sinned, say something like, “That’s good, not many can say that, I know I can’t.” Then point to sins you know everyone has committed at one time or another like lying, disobeying parents, stealing, etc. These are all sin.

Romans 6:23a: “The wages of sin is death.” Explain how we are all going to die. “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). We are not only going to die physically, but we will all stand before God on judgment day to give an account of our sin. Sin has wages and they must be paid for.

The wages (penalty) of sin is death. This is not only dying physically but spiritually, being separated from God throughout all eternity. God has made provision for us so we won’t have to face this penalty, but the choice is ours.

Romans 6:23b: “The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Jesus paid the penalty for our sins when He died on the cross. He went to the cross, experienced death and separation from God in our place. Eternal life is a free gift. We don’t have to pay the penalty for our sins ourself. He did it for us. This free gift comes only through Jesus and His finished work for us on the cross (John 14:6 and Acts 4:12).

Romans 10:13: “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Our only responsibility to receive this free gift of eternal life is to call upon Him, accept Jesus as our Savior and only hope of salvation, ask Him to forgive us of our sins, come into our heart and be the Lord of our life (John 1:12; Revelation 3:20; 1 John 1:9).

At this point, ask them if they would like to pray and receive Jesus right now. If they say yes, pray a simple prayer for them to accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. If they say no, ask if they care if you say a brief pray for them. Most people won’t mind if you pray for them.

Pray something like, “Lord, I pray for (use their name) that you will touch them, open their heart to receive you, and make yourself real to them. In Jesus name, Amen!” Look directly at them, and say in faith, (don’t ask if they’d like to pray again) “Pray with me.” Ask them to repeat after you and pray a simple sinner’s prayer with them to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Sinner’s Prayer

“Lord, I know I’ve sinned against you. I ask you to forgive me of all my sins, come into my heart, be the Lord of my life, and help me to live for you forever. In Jesus name!”

Assurance of Salvation

After they pray, assure them of their salvation. Say, “Did you mean what you just prayed?” The last verse we read said, “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13). God keeps His Word! When we pray a prayer like this God answers it. You called on the Lord just now and He said “YOU WOULD BE SAVED.” Take them to 1 John 5:13 for additional assurance.

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13). Ask, “Do you now believe in Jesus, the Son of God? Then God’s Word says you now have eternal life.”

Follow Up

There are a few things new Christians need to do to grow in their relationship with the Lord. After sharing these principles with them, call or visit them in a few days and from time to time to see how they’re doing.

Remember, immediately after the first harvest of souls “Those who had received His word were baptized...they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:41-42).

1. **Confess Jesus as Lord.** One of the first things they must do is confess to someone they have accepted Jesus as lord and savior of their life. Stress to them the importance of telling someone what they did.

“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10).

“Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32-33).

2. **Pray daily.** Encourage them to take time each day to talk to God. “Men always ought to pray and not lose (faint) heart” (Luke 18:1). “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Those who had received the Word were committed to prayer (Acts 2:41-42).
3. **Read the Word.** Encourage them to read a little from their Bible each day. They don’t have to read a lot, but some every day. Encourage them to stay in the New Testament for a while.

“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

“As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). “

“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near” (Revelation 1:3).

If they don’t have a Bible make sure you get them one that is a translation they can easily understand.

4. **Fellowship with other believers.** It’s extremely important for them to attend a strong Bible believing church right away.

“Those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added (to the church)...they were continually devoting themselves to fellowship” (Acts 2:41-42).

The Bible says we are not to “forsake the assembling of ourselves together” (Hebrews 10:25). They need fellowship for growth and encouragement. We also become like those we are around (1 Corinthians 15:33 and Proverbs 13:20). Don’t just tell them to go to church, offer to pick them up and take them to church with you.

- 5. Follow Jesus in baptism.** Talk to them about baptism. It’s important they realize they were saved the moment they called on the Lord. The Bible says, “Those who had received his word were baptized” (Acts 2:41). Baptism doesn’t save us, but it is an act of public confession of our faith in Christ – that we have died, been buried and risen with Him to walk our new life in Him (Romans 6:3-4).

The Truth About Water Baptism

What is the significance of water baptism? How are we to baptize? Is sprinkling or pouring sufficient or is immersion required? What is the correct baptismal formula? Is baptism a requirement for salvation?

Baptismal Regeneration

Baptismal regeneration is the name given to doctrines held by some Christian denominations which maintain that salvation is intimately linked to the act of baptism, and that salvation is impossible apart from it. If this is true, then it isn't primarily the finished work of Christ alone that saves us, but the act of baptism. This is a works salvation and not faith alone and is an erroneous doctrine.

New Testament baptism can be paralleled to Old Testament circumcision. Paul went to great lengths to explain in the case of Abraham, faith came first and then circumcision. Abraham was justified by faith and circumcision was an outward sign of justification by faith. "How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised" (Romans 4:10-11).

New Testament baptism is similar. We are saved (justified) by faith alone and not by any works that we do, and this includes baptism. Baptism, like circumcision, is a sign and seal of justification by faith. We first place our faith in Christ who alone saves us from our sins, then we follow the Lord in water baptism which is an outward sign of our inward faith in Him. The moment we place our faith in Jesus, we become "the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Paul said, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death" (Romans 6:3)? This is a dry baptism. When we put our faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13). This is not water baptism. The Holy Spirit, not a man, is baptizing us into the body of Christ, not water.

"Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"

(Romans 6:4). Because we have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ at conversion, “Therefore we are buried with Him by (water) baptism.” Baptism is an outward sign of what has already taken place in our heart.

Frequently Misunderstood Scriptures

1. He who believes and is baptized will be saved. Just before His ascension, Jesus commissioned His disciples, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16). The first part of verse 16 seems to indicate that both believing and baptism is required for salvation. Context is paramount.

Jesus went on to say, “he who does not believe will be condemned.” Jesus did not continue on as in the first part of the verse to include that the lack of baptism excludes us from salvation, but the failure to believe alone. He did not say, he who does not believe and is not baptized will be condemned. He simply said that the one who does not believe would be condemned not the one who isn’t baptized. Therefore, it is believing that saves and not baptism.

2. Born of water and spirit. Jesus told Nicodemus, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:3-5).

Context is imperative. Nicodemus, “Do I return to the womb where I was once birthed and be born all over again?” Jesus answers his question in context of natural birth. Every woman knows “born of water” refers to a water or natural birth. A woman’s water breaks and shortly thereafter a child is born. Jesus goes on to clarify this further by saying, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6).

The context makes it abundantly clear that Jesus was referring to both a fleshly and spiritual birth. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” A person cannot be born of the Spirit unless they are first born of the flesh or natural birth. Hence, man must be born again. A person in this life has already had a fleshly birth and therefore to see the kingdom of God they must also have a spiritual birth – “born again.”

3. For the remission of sins. On the day of Pentecost, at the end of his message, Peter said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Was he saying we are to be baptized in order to be forgiven and without out being baptized there is no forgiveness?

The Greek preposition “eis” is found over 1700 times in the New Testament and is translated a myriad of ways. Just as our English word “for” can have different meanings, eis does as well. While one seems to support that baptism is required for salvation others do not. Greek scholars such as A.T. Robertson maintain the Greek preposition eis in Acts 2:38 should be translated “because of” or “in view of,” and not “in order to,” or “for the purpose of.”

Passages such as Matthew 12:41 translate this same word “because of” communicating the result of a particular action. Nineveh “repented at the preaching of Jonah.” The word translated “at” is eis as well. The clear meaning of this passage is that they repented “because of” or “as the result of” Jonah’s preaching. If we are to be consistent with the way the preposition eis is used in conjunction with baptism, we must conclude that Acts 2:38 refers to being baptized “because” they had received forgiveness of sins.

4. Baptism does also now save us. Peter uses Noah and his family being spared from the flood as an antitype (opposite) of water baptism. “When once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by (through) water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us” (1 Peter 3:20-21).

At our first glance of these two verses, we see that eight souls were saved by water through a universal deluge upon the earth. Like Noah and his family, we also are saved by water. This is true, but we must interpret this in the entire context of the flood (Genesis 6-9). The same water that then flooded the earth, judged and condemned the rest of mankind. All of humanity living on the earth died by water, while only eight people were saved by water.

Only those who listened to the Word preached by Noah concerning God’s impending judgment and took refuge in the ark were saved by (through) water. The rest of mankind died by water. Had they listened and entered the ark, they would have been spared. “For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Hebrews 4:2).

The ark was a type of Jesus. Only those who fled the coming judgment by first entering the ark of safety were saved by water. The rest were judged by water. Water or baptism is of no value whatsoever unless we first take refuge in Christ our ark of safety. If we are baptized without first trusting Jesus as the only one who can save us from the wrath to come, baptism

profits us nothing. On the contrary, baptism seals our judgment.

5. Preach the gospel not baptism. The Corinthians were boasting and arguing over who they were baptized by and which carried the greatest weight and importance. Some were baptized by Peter, some Apollos, and some Paul. This brought division in the church then as does boasting over which denomination is best and preferable, etc. It brings divisiveness in the church instead of unity.

Paul fed up with it all said, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. I thank God that I baptized none of you...For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel...lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” (1 Corinthians 1:10, 14 and 17).

Paul makes it abundantly clear that baptism wasn't part of the gospel message of the New Testament Church and it shouldn't be ours either. He takes it a step further indicating that including baptism as a part of the gospel message is to make the cross of Christ of none effect. In their case, the rite of baptism was being used to nullify the message of the cross. Let's preach Christ!

The Proper Mode of Baptism

The original Greek verb for baptism is “baptidzo.” It means “to immerse.” Though some churches sprinkle or pour water in the baptismal ceremony, it is when a believer is completely submerged and then raised up out of the water that true baptism has taken place. To baptize in any other way is not a true baptism.

Is pouring or sprinkling the correct mode of baptism? No. If the mode of baptism is incorrect, is it authentic? Does God honor such baptisms? While it is true that sprinkling or pouring water over the baptismal candidate is not the authentic means of baptism, I'm sure God honors it if we're being baptized for the right reason – because we've trusted Jesus as our only hope of salvation. God is not as legalistic as most of His followers.

What if we were baptized by either sprinkling or pouring and later God revealed to us that it was not the proper means of baptism? We must always follow our own personal conviction. “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” (Romans 14:5). If the Holy Spirit has enlightened us concerning the proper and improper mode of baptism, He has done so for a reason. We must walk in the light God gives us (Matthew 25:29). “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). In such cases, being baptized again would be appropriate.

The Proper Baptismal Formula

What is the correct baptismal formula to be spoken over the one being baptized? Should we be baptized in the name of the Lord? In the name of Jesus? Or in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit? Which is the correct formula?

We are told in Acts 19:5 “in the name of the Lord Jesus” and Acts 2:38 “be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ.” In Matthew 28:19-20 we’re told to go forth, “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

The “Jesus only” or “oneness” doctrine upholds that baptism is to be done “in the name of Jesus” rather than the trinitarian formula “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” This formula is usually associated with Oneness Pentecostalism, however, some trinitarians also baptize in Jesus’ name. Those who ascribe to the oneness doctrine believe that “Jesus” is the name of God revealed in the New Testament and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three manifestations or titles of the one God – Jesus.

The first church I planted and pastored was in a somewhat small town. There was an apostolic church that was pretty dominant in that area. Since we were a new church and I was young in the ministry, some of their people would come by and talk with me now and then. Baptism was one, among many, of the doctrines they wanted to dispute with me. Being young in the ministry, I suppose they thought they could easily persuade or at least confuse me. After many discussions on this topic, I finally looked them square in the face and said, “I got it, I’m going to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost – In Jesus Name.” It baffled them to say the least.

The formula we use isn’t as important as why we’re being baptized. Are we just going through some religious motions or are we being baptized because we have turned our life over to Jesus and trusted Him as our Lord and Savior? Are we being baptized because He’s our only hope of salvation and we want to follow Jesus in water baptism? If this is our reason for getting baptized, the purpose of our baptism far outweighs the formula being used. Baptism can be a wonderful spiritual experience, or we can go down a dry sinner and come up a wet sinner.

Infant Baptism

There is no scriptural basis for infant baptism. Throughout God's Word baptism was always the first step in following Jesus after one's conversion. Baptism follows conversion, conversion doesn't follow baptism. A person is baptized because they have made a commitment to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. A child should never be baptized until they're old enough to understand what they're doing. Based on their understanding of the gospel, they commit their life to Jesus, and follow Him in water baptism.

Baby dedication is another thing altogether. This is more for the parents than the child. Though there is something spiritual that can take place at this time because of its parents committing him or her to the Lord. The Lord may from that day forward cause His hand to be upon the life of the child and the parents in a supernatural way. This is seen clearly in Hannah's dedication of Samuel before he was even born and her subsequent commitment of him to the Lord after he was weaned (1 Samuel 1). God honors our commitments!

The Purpose and Significance of Water Baptism

Having discussed the error in baptismal regeneration, the mode and formulas of baptism, that it is not part of the gospel message, and the fallacy of infant baptism, what is baptism? What is the significance of water baptism? Though baptism is symbolic, it is far more than that.

1. It's a public confession. When a person is baptized because of surrendering their life to Christ, they are making a public confession of their faith in Him. It testifies to his or her community what happened when their life was changed by Jesus. It confirms and strengthens the new believer's commitment and gives the believer the opportunity to openly testify to others of their experience with Christ.

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My Words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

"Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10).

This confession is the first step in following Jesus. It seals our salvation, but it's only the beginning. We must go forth from water baptism to continue to confess Him before men, thus overcoming the evil one. “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony” (Revelation 12:11).

2. It's a declaration of what happened. Immersion is a picture of burial. The old man is dead and buried. A new man is raised up out of the grave, reborn to live a new life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Burial is significant, in that, it suggest finality and permanency. A person may temporarily die and be resuscitated, but when they have been buried, they can no longer be revived. Their death is permanent!

The old man is dead and gone once and for all. There's no more reviving. It's final! We've died, been buried and a new man is risen to walk in newness of life. “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection” (Romans 6:5). If you feel you've never properly buried your old man, sinful nature, and dedicated your whole self to the Lord, don't wait any longer—find a place to participate in water baptism and be totally free!

3. It corresponds to being added to the church. “Those who had received His Word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). They weren't baptized and then thrown out into the world to fend for themselves. Before we are baptized in water, we are first baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ – the universal church (1 Corinthians 12:13). When we are baptized in water, we are to be placed into a local body of believers where we can grow in our new life.

Far too frequently this has been left out of the equation of water baptism. A new convert needs more than to simply be added to the universal church. This is wonderful and indeed takes place at conversion. However, this alone is not sufficient. It's far too abstract in our life and walk as a new convert. A new believer needs something more concrete – the local church! They must be anchored into a local body of believers.

4. It's a commitment to **discipleship.** “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). After being baptized, they were locked into the local church and committed to the process of discipleship, to be molded into the image of Jesus, learning to follow Him fully.

This was what Jesus commanded and expects. His commission was, “Go ye therefore, and teach (make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Baptism is the first phase of the discipleship process and of “all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” It’s the first command to follow and obey in the process of discipleship. It should be noted that “all things” is extremely comprehensive and would take a lifetime of teaching and discipleship to accomplish.

Though discipleship is a lifetime commitment, the emphasis here is on helping the new believer make Jesus the Lord of their everyday life. Let’s make Jesus Lord!

A Call to Discipleship

Discipleship is the process of training a believer to carry on the work of Jesus Christ. Discipleship is an integral part of the growth and development of a local church. Without discipleship, the church is nothing more than a club. Jesus called the first disciples in Mark 1:16-20. We can learn a lot from the calling of these first disciples. Below are a few important facts and characteristics of discipleship.

Jesus will Have Disciples

Discipleship was practiced throughout scripture. Jesus will train people to carry on His work, those who are willing to learn and in turn train others. Discipleship is declared in the great commission, “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).

Every believer is called to be and make disciples. We see discipleship taking place immediately following the day of Pentecost, “Those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:41-42).

Paul commissioned Timothy, “The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). This passage exemplifies the discipleship process. We are trained by someone, we in turn train someone, and they in turn train someone. The key is “faithful men.” The Psalmist cried, “Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases to be, for the faithful disappear from among the sons of men” (Psalm 12:1).

Unfortunately, there is very little true discipleship going on today. We are not learning and growing, which enables us to teach others. “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you” (Hebrews 5:12). Many people go to church their entire life without being disciplined.

The church needs a renewed call to discipleship. We see discipleship carried out in the lives of Elijah and Elisha. Elisha was busy plowing in the fields when Elijah threw his mantle on him, calling him to follow. Elisha used the yokes to start a fire, cooked the oxen, gave it to his

friends, and left to follow Elijah. He burnt all his bridges to the past when he began to follow Elijah, there was no turning back.

A true disciple's anointing, victory and achievements will far surpass that of their mentor. In 2 Kings 2, three times Elijah told Elisha that he was going on a long, difficult journey to Bethel, Jericho and Jordan. Each time Elisha responds by saying, "As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" (2 Kings 2:2, 2 Kings 2:4, 2 Kings 2:6).

When they arrived at the Jordan, "Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you? Elisha said, Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me. So he said, You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so" (2 Kings 2:7-10).

Notice, "If you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so." We must continue following our mentor and not let anything detour us if we expect to advance beyond them in our anointing, victory and achievements. Shortly thereafter, Elijah was taken away in a whirlwind. His mantle fell on Elisha, and he received a double portion of Elijah's anointing. Elisha performed twice the miracles as that of Elijah.

It was said of Joshua, "As the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses" (Joshua 11:15). This is an example of a disciple's faithful obedience. Moses delivered the children of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt, but was unable to lead them into the promise land. Joshua did what Moses was unable to do.

Jesus Chose Simple People

Abraham Lincoln said, "God must love common people, He made so many of them." Most of the disciples were rough fishermen. Levi was a tax collector and was pilfering off the top of what he collected from taxes. David's followers were a collection of men who were in distress, debt and discontented (1 Samuel 22:2).

Isaiah said, "Let My outcasts dwell with you. Be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler" (Isaiah 16:4). The best disciples are normally the most unlikely candidates. People who don't always have it all together (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

Jesus Chose Workers

The disciples were busy working when Jesus called them. They put all they had into what they were doing. Though Levi was dishonest, he was still a hard worker. Paul said he labored more abundantly than all the rest (1 Corinthians 15:8-10).

The Bible says, “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord” (Romans 12:11). “And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Hebrews 6:11-12). Elisha, likewise, was hard at work when Elijah called him.

True Disciples are Servants

Jesus said, “It shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26-28). Elisha was a servant before he received his double portion.

It was said of Joshua that he was Moses’ servant (Joshua 1:1). Jesus said, “If you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own” (Luke 16:12)? Paul wrote concerning Jesus, “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant” (Philippians 2:5-11). Disciples are always servants. Elisha was plowing behind twelve pair of oxen when Elijah called him.

Disciples Gave up Everything

The disciples left their fishing business, including their hired servants, and followed Jesus (Mark 1:20). They stood to inherit a very lucrative business. Jesus was being followed by a large crowd of people. He gave them three requirements of discipleship, without which he said, they could not be His disciples.

- 1. They must hate those close to them.** He was not telling them to literally hate anyone, but that He must be first in their lives.

- 2. They had to take up their cross.** The cross was a sign of death. He was saying they must give up all their ambitions and put Him first.
- 3. They had to give up their possessions.** When we become His disciple all we have becomes His. From that point on we are merely stewards of our things (Luke 14:25-31). Elisha sacrificed all he had when he followed Elijah (1 Kings 19:19-21).

As a note of encouragement, when we forsake all and follow Jesus, the return we receive far out weighs what we leave behind. Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30).

Disciples are Called to a Life of Uncertainty

“We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). Jesus said, “Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Matthew 8:20). Abraham was called of God to leave his father’s land and go to a land which God said he would show him (Genesis 12:1). “Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him” (Hebrews 10:38). All we have are the promises of God.

Disciples Inevitably Become Fishers of Men

“Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17). Notice the inevitable, when we begin to follow Jesus, we inevitably begin fishing (soul winning). If we are not fisher, we inevitably are not following. The true follower of Jesus is always fishing for the souls of mankind.

A few things to remember about fishing – soul winning:

- 1. Start where you are.** Each of us has a testimony (Revelation 12:11). The blind man said, “One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25).
- 2. The devil will attempt to strike fear in our hearts.** This must be resisted. “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy

1:7). The writer of Hebrews said, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:6).

- 3. It's the Holy Spirit's job to save people, not our's.** We must, however, develop a deep rooted persuasion in the gospel's power and ability. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes" (Romans 1:16). He was persuaded that if someone will believe, the gospel will transform their life.

Emulate

The scriptures say, "Be imitators (followers) of God, as beloved children" (Ephesians 5:1). We mimic God as we familiarize ourselves with Him in scripture, and then do our best to be like Him. The Bible says, "He that says he abides in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6). 1 Corinthians 11:1 says, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." People are not perfect and at times fail. That's why Paul said, "as I also imitate Christ." We emulate our mentors only as they imitate Jesus, not where they fall short.

Peter failed miserably in his denial of Christ. Yet, on the day of Pentecost, it was Peter who stood up and boldly proclaimed the gospel. Acts 2:14 says, "Peter, taking his stand with the eleven." As Peter rose to preach, the other eleven apostles stood with him in full support, in spite of his failure. All of us at times fall short. When our mentor falls short we are to stand with him and follow him as he follows Christ. The eleven followed Peter, in spite of his failure, because they were confident of God's call on his life.

Church Planting Guide

Starting a new church or ministry is one of the most rewarding things you can do to advance the gospel, but it can also be very challenging. After planting multiple churches and youth outreach centers, I can tell you from experience that you will need all the information and support you can get.

Although church buildings of all sizes sit on many street corners in the United States and beyond, there's always a need for new places of worship. Whether a lofty cathedral or a dusty barn, each congregation reaches a unique group of people that existing ministries can't. If you feel the Lord leading you to start a new church, there's probably a need only you can meet.

Church Planting Prerequisites

- 1. You must first be sure you're [called of God](#).** The calling of God is essential! If you're not called you can do more damage to the kingdom and to your own spiritual life. "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God (Hebrews 5:4). If you're not called to plant a church it will be a devastating experience.

If you are called, you will be able to withstand the difficult birthing process and build something that will display God's glory in the region and beyond. Even when called, your faith will be tested like never before and you may even begin to doubt your calling. However, you must set your face like flint to the task that's before. You must "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).

- 2. Cultivate a strong relationship with God.** Spend time developing your relationship with God. It's easy to get so involved in ministry that we neglect our personal time with God. Sometimes read and study the Bible for the enjoyment of it, not just to find a message for Sunday morning. It's important to spend time praying and worshiping without it being only motivated only by ministry. Spend ample time with God and in His Word, seated at the feet of the Master.

Luke 10:38-42 – "Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His Word. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so

many things; but only one thing is necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

- 3. Bathe your endeavor in prayer.** No great work for God has ever be accomplished without much time in prayer. Jesus knew this truth and in the midst of many ministry opportunities He made time to pray. Getting others to join with you in corporate prayer will help even more. Great power is released when the church comes together to pray.

Be assured the devil will do everything he can to hinder the work of God from going forth. You must engage in [spiritual warfare](#). This must be done prior to your launch date in preparation and it must continue throughout your entire ministry. Satan never lets up and you must not either. You will need spiritual warriors to lock arms with you in the spiritual realm. Jesus knew this very well which is why He sought the face of God first.

Mark 1:35 – “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”

Mark 3:27 – “No man can enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.”

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 – “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.”

Matthew 18:18-20 – “Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.”

- 4. You must have, exercise, and speak faith.** If you’ve been called to plant a church, you will be building something out of nothing. You may have services where you wonder if anyone will show up. This requires a great amount of faith and will determine if you have what it takes to be an [effective church planter](#). If you work hard and persevere, God will help you birth a glorious church through His grace. You’re bringing into existence something that currently does not exist.

Hebrews 11:1 – “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Hebrews 11:3 – “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of the things that are visible.”

- 5. Having a support system is essential.** There will also be times when you need encouragement and counsel from someone outside your family and congregation. Paul was sent out of the church at Antioch while they remained as his covering (Acts 13-14). It can be a pastor, local church or ministerial fellowship.

It's also a good idea to have a group of pastors you meet with regularly for prayer and fellowship. When starting a new church, my fellowship and a group of men I met with weekly for prayer helped sustain me through the difficult birthing stages of the church and times of personal struggle and doubt.

- 6. Be willing to learn.** Many church planters are strong-willed people who are not willing to learn new things. They tend to cling to a particular ministry model or idea taught to them by their mentor or other pastor. If that model happens to not work in their situation, they often become defensive and discouraged. Be open to something new!

Proverbs 9:8-9 – “Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.”

It's important to learn from your mistakes, admit when you are wrong, and be willing to change. If you are stubborn, refuse to try new things, and believe it's your way or the highway, your church planting venture will eventually fail. You must seek counsel and ideas from others and be open to the Holy Spirit as to how He may lead you. He may very well direct you to do things in an entirely different way than others have done.

- 7. Take your [pastoral calling](#) serious.** God has given you a grave responsibility of caring for His flock. You're responsible making sure they are well fed. This will take a lot of time in diligent study and preparation. The pastor's study is an essential place where you must spend a great deal of time. I'm convinced expository preaching and teaching is the best way to accomplish this.

2 Timothy 2:15 – “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

You are also responsible for guarding your flock against wolves in sheep’s clothing. This can come from without as well as from within. There will be those who will attempt to draw your people away into doctrinal error and from the vision God has given you of which they are apart of. You cannot shy away from warning them and fighting of those who would lead them astray and away from your care.

Acts 20:27-30 – “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”

1 Peter 5:1-4 – “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

Church Planting Basics

Much of this is applicable to the United States. If you live outside the U.S. you will need to do some research and apply it accordingly to where you reside. We’re confident the Lord will give you wisdom and prosper your endeavors.

- 1. Decide on a name.** Ask the Lord to guide you when selecting a name for your church. It’s a good idea to incorporate your ministry focus into the name if possible. Try to avoid using names that are similar to ones used by other churches in your area.

Once you decide on a name, go ahead and register a domain name for future online ventures like a website, blog or staff email addresses. The domain name doesn’t have to be exactly the same as your church name, it can be something similar or geared toward a specific ministry focus. Domain registrars can also host, build, and manage your church website if you don’t have the technical skills to do it yourself.

- 2. Appoint board members.** In the beginning, find people from outside your church to serve as board members. For example, you might start with a few local pastors you trust or leaders from an established church planting organization or your ministerial fellowship or denomination. Keep in mind authority is a lot easier to give than take back if you happen to pick the wrong person.

After your ministry has been in existence for six months to a year appoint people from within your local body to [positions of leadership](#).

2 Timothy 2:2 – “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

Titus 1:5 – “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.”

- 3. Create your governing documents.** Church constitution and by-laws are the governing documents for your ministry. You will need to prepare these right away and be sure to include a statement of faith. If possible, [get a few samples](#) from other churches or ministerial fellowships to use as a starting point.
- 4. Incorporate as a non-profit.** If you decide to incorporate, you will need to obtain the correct forms from the Secretary of State where you are starting the church. Incorporation is not necessary, and there is some debate over whether a church should incorporate, but we personally believe the benefits outweigh the negatives. Research the subject and decide if it's right for your ministry.

Articles of incorporation, are necessary for your church to be established in the eyes of the government. The process for obtaining this document varies from state to state, so you'll want to do some research to find the most efficient way to file in your state. Be sure to file as a nonprofit.

This is usually done through the Secretary of State. You can fill out the articles of incorporation or to make it as easy as possible I usually included with it our by-laws and for the articles say “see attached constitution and by-laws.” Articles of Incorporation are required before applying for your 501(3)c.

- 5. Get an Employer Identification Number (EIN).** An EIN is used by the IRS for tax purposes and will be vital for a variety of establishing steps and documents, including getting a bank account. Applying for an EIN is simple. All you have to do is fill out Form

[SS-4](#) and turn it in to the IRS. Form SS-4 asks for basic information about your church such as your name, address, and type of entity.

For the type of entity, be sure to select “church.” You can submit your application [online](#), by mail, fax, or even turn it in at a local IRS office. You may think you don’t need an EIN until you have paid staff but this is not true! The EIN serves the same role as a social security number does for an individual but for your business or nonprofit.

- 6. Get your state sales tax number.** It’s suggested you get on the state website where your church will be located or go to your state department of revenue office in your city. This is simple and does not take much time. Your state sales tax number will exempt you from paying sales tax for what you purchase for the church.

- 7. Open a bank account in the name of the church.** This is where your EIN is used in place of the social security number. All donations must be deposited in your church bank account. All expenditures should be done through this account. It’s wise, if possible, to have either your treasurer or administrative assistance to be in charge of this as a safeguard to the pastor. The pastor should, however, oversee this and all ministries of the church.

- 8. Apply for 501(c)3 status or letter of exemption.** 501(c)3 status exempts your church from federal income tax and gives your supporters tax credit for their donations. The 501(c)3 status is more difficult to obtain and requires a fairly extensive application and relatively expensive fee. Before you can apply for federal exemption, you will have to prove your church exists. You may want get an attorney to help but it can be done on your own.

There is some debate over whether a church should obtain tax exempt status or their 501(3)c letter of exemption. Churches are automatically exempt as a religious charitable nonprofit organization. This is stated on the front page of the application. Obtaining this, however, does give your congregation and contributors more security and confidence in the church. We personally believe the benefits outweigh the negatives. Each church must decide if 501(c)3 status is right for them.

How to Apply

This might seem like a daunting process, there are plenty of online resources to help you along as you apply for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, including this [501\(c\)\(3\) Tax Guide for Churches and Religious Organizations](#). Start by figuring out which form to file. You'll use either [Form 1023](#) or [Form 1023-EZ](#).

Form 1023-EZ works primarily for smaller churches, but there are reasons you may want to use the longer form: If you want to apply for grants it's usually expected you to have used the longer form for application. This is because the longer form requires you to submit some of your organizational documents, including your by-laws, another step toward transparency. If your church grows and has a larger income, you may need to submit more information to the IRS, so submitting the longer form at the outset saves you more time in the long run.

Once your application is approved, the IRS will send you a letter of determination informing you of any annual filing requirements and confirming your eligibility to receive tax-deductible contributions. Churches are usually not required to file an annual report (Form 990). Be prepared, they will often request more information or additional documentation a time or two before approving your status. Once you have your official status in hand, you can accept tax-deductible contributions worry-free. This will give people confidence in both you and the church.

- 9. Find a place to meet.** If you don't already know which city or area you want to start the church in, pray over a map and ask God where He wants you to go. He promises that if we acknowledge Him, He will, not might, direct our paths (Proverbs 3:6). We seldom know with absolute certainty which location to choose, but we must exercise faith. Paul, even after having a vision, "concluded" that God had called him to preach in Macedonia.

Acts 16:10 – "Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them."

Temporarily [meeting in a house](#) is an inexpensive way to put a core group together before committing to a permanent location. Another alternative is to rent a hotel room or banquet hall. Hotels will typically allow you pay by the week or service and will usually offer a discount if you meet every week. If you have the funds you can rent a retail, office or warehouse space.

10. Set up a church office. In the beginning you will probably work from home. As soon as possible lease an office space until you find a permanent meeting place for the church. Try to set regular office hours so people will know where and when they can contact you. Buy or borrow a computer if you don't already have one, then design your stationary, business cards, flyers and post cards for the opening service. Also, make sure you have a local phone number and a post office box.

11. Raise funds and ask for support. Finances are typically limited when planting a new church. It's sad to say, but the more money you have the better your chances of getting off to a good start. Unless you have a group of people who are willing to support the ministry financially, you will have to raise funds. Don't be afraid to ask for both money and people!

Make a list of every church you are familiar with, along with every individual believer and couple you know. Once you've put together your mailing list, write the first draft of your support letter. Your support letter should be professional and personal. Let your potential supporters know you would appreciate any help they can offer, and that God will bless them for their generosity. Suggest they give a one time gift to help you get started, and/or a monthly commitment of support for six months.

Pray over the letter and mail it out. Call the people on your mailing list to let them know the letter is coming and also to explain your vision. Be bold! Remember, you are building something great for God. Also, don't forget about online giving. A study of over 17,500 donors by Cygnus Applied Research found that more than half of donors who are 65 or older prefer to make donations online, along with even higher percentages of younger donors.

Online payment portals like [PayPal](#) offer donation buttons and text links that can easily be added to websites, emails and other electronic communication. Be sure to link your church PayPal account to your bank account. [Mobile giving](#) is also very popular today. Anyway you can make it easy for people to give is good. There are many other online tools you can use but this gives you a starting place.

12. Develop a core group and launch team. If you're planting a new church in an area you are familiar with, make a list of anyone you think might be interested in being part of your new ministry. Write, call and visit them. Share your vision with them and challenge them to get behind it. Be positive and excited! That said, be careful about soliciting people who are already committed to another church. Church planters should be more concerned about reaching the whole city than just building their own kingdom.

Philippians 2:2 – “Be of one mind, do nothing from selfish ambition.”

If you're forming a temporary launch team, some churches may be open to letting you borrow members for a few months. Whether you should form a more permanent core group of leaders or a launch team depends upon your particular situation. Launch teams are easier to build (and dissolve), because the launch of the church gives the team a defined end date.

Once you have a few people who are interested, set up an organizational meeting. At the meeting pray, allow them to get to know one another, and discuss possibilities for your first service. Don't be discouraged if no one seems to get behind your vision. Often God wants you to take leadership and just start, exercising your apostolic authority.

If you have a large church you're going out of this can be extremely beneficial. I have a pastor friend who was on staff at a large church. When he felt led to plant a church in the area, about twenty miles away, the pastor was very supportive. In fact, the pastor told his congregation what my friend was planning. He then told them that if anyone wanted to go with him and help they were welcome to do so. My friend had around one hundred people at his first service.

I, however, have never had that luxury. I always had to start completely from scratch. I did as much advertising and promotion I could, phone calls, contacting anyone and everyone I could think of inviting them to our first service. After which I hoped and prayed some people would show up. Even if it's only you and your family at first, you can go on to build a strong work. It will take time, hard work, persistence, prayer, and determination. Regardless of who you have with you, proceed with faith that God will do what you are believing Him for. Remember, you're created something out of nothing by faith. Believe God and work hard!

Romans 4:17-21 – “As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations, before Him whom he believed, even God, Who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.”

13. Recruit ministry leaders and church workers. If at all possible arrange to have ushers, greeters, worship leaders, and children's workers for your first service. Obviously, if you don't have a core group of people it will be a little more difficult. You will also want to have some type of worship, but having a full [worship team](#) from the beginning isn't always possible. Take advantage of free advertising options to solicit workers who might want to be involved in a new church plant.

14. Develop a marketing and advertising plan. If you can afford it, buy newspaper, radio and/or television ads. Most people don't have much money when starting a new church. If that's the case, tap into any free publicity you can get. Most Christian radio and television stations offer free church news or public service announcements.

It's also a good idea to purchase a mailing list for your area and send out flyers or post cards. Obtain a bulk mailing permit from the post office, which will greatly reduce the cost of your mailing. Give yourself plenty of time before you do the mailing to apply for your permit. There are also companies that will develop an outreach campaign for you, but it can be costly. Years ago we did a mailing by purchasing a list of addresses and printing 6,000 post cards on our personal printer. We saved money, but we put in many hours of hard labor!

15. Plan special events and outings. Having special events is a great way to stir up interest and bless the congregation. Use guest speakers, musicians and other ministries that will encourage your people and the community. Blending diverse styles and ministry focus enables you to reach different age groups and types of people. Make sure the ministries are first class and can operate under the anointing. If you do, your church will build a reputation for bringing in [anointed, talented ministries](#), teachers and music groups.

16. Follow up on visitors and church members. Follow up is extremely important. Jesus taught it in Luke 15 and Ezekiel condemned the shepherds of his day for not doing it in Ezekiel 34. Follow up on everyone who visits your church. Send them a personalized letter or email right away. Call and schedule a visit in their home, meet them out for coffee, etc.

Also, if a member misses two or three weeks in a row someone should contact them. In Luke 15 Jesus states that people will fall away and we should go after them. You never know what people may be going through. They may be discouraged or under spiritual attack. Let's put personal ministry back into the church.

Planting a church is not for the faint of heart, but it is one of the most exciting and rewarding things you can do to advance the kingdom. Even when it seems like you're not making progress, don't give up! After you've done all that you can do to get people in the door, Jesus is ultimately the one who builds the church. He has called you to feed, lead and commission the people He brings your way.

Sample Church Bylaws

When starting a new church, the first documents you need to develop are your constitution, bylaws and statement of faith. These are the guidelines and regulations that govern your ministry. The following example is based on requirements in the United States, but can be modified for other countries as well. Feel free to amend this template for your specific ministry, church, denomination, or geographic area.

Church Constitution and Bylaws Template

(insert name of church)

Whereas we, being an incorporate body of people of like precious faith:

1. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life through His death and the power of His resurrection.
2. Believe the Bible to be God's word and the revelation of His will to man and accept it as our rule for faith and conduct.
3. Believe Christian fellowship, mutual edification and evangelical effort, in the form of local churches, is God's ordained order for His people.
4. Believe each church is to assemble together for worship, fellowship, counsel, and instruction in the Word of God, and the work of the ministry.
5. Believe each church should exercise the gifts and offices provided for in the New Testament to obtain the Christian goal, "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect."
6. Believe God has called and anointed us to emphasize the fullness of the Gospel through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, we have accepted and adopted the following Statement of Fundamental Truths and Constitution. We shall seek, by the grace of God, to be governed by the Constitution as set forth, and will also seek to teach and propagate the doctrines contained in the Statement of Fundamental Truths.

Statement of Fundamental Truths

- 1. The scriptures inspired.** The Bible is the inspired Word of God, a revelation from God to man, the infallible rule of faith and conduct, and is superior to conscience and reason, but not contrary to reason (2 Timothy 3:15, 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 Peter 2:2).

- 2. The one true God.** The one true God has revealed Himself as the eternally self-existent, self-revealed "I AM" and has further revealed Himself as embodying the principles of relationship and association, i.e., Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Deuteronomy 6:4, Mark 12:29, Isaiah 43:10, Isaiah 11, Matthew 28:19).

- 3. Man, his fall and redemption.** Man was created good and upright for God said, "Let Us make man in our image, after our likeness." But man, by voluntary transgression, fell and his only hope of redemption is in Jesus Christ the Son of God (Genesis 1:26-31, Genesis 3:1-7, Romans 5:12-21).

- 4. The salvation of man.**
 - 1. Conditions of Salvation.** The grace of God, which brings salvation, has appeared to all men, through the preaching of repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ; the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, and being justified by hope of eternal life (Titus 2:11, Romans 10:13-15, Luke 24:47, Titus 3:5-7).
 - 2. The evidence of salvation.** The inward evidence to the believer of his salvation is the direct witness of the spirit (Romans 8:16). The outward evidence to all men is a life of righteousness and true holiness.

- 5. Baptism in water.** The ordinance of baptism by a burial with Christ should be observed as commanded in the scriptures by all who have repented and believed in Christ as Savior and Lord. In so doing, they have the body washed in pure water as an outward symbol of cleansing, while their heart has already been sprinkled with the blood of Christ as in inner cleansing. They declare to the world that they have died with Jesus and been raised with Him to walk in newness of life (Matthew 28:19, Acts 10:47, Acts 18, Romans 6:4, Acts 20:21, Hebrews 10:22).

6. **The Lord's supper.** The Lord's supper, consisting of the elements, bread and the fruit of the vine, is the symbol expressing our sharing the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4), a memorial of His suffering and death (1 Corinthians 11:26), a prophecy of His second coming (1 Corinthians 11:26), and is enjoined on all believers until He comes.

7. **Regeneration.** All people who turn from their sins and put their faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ receive a new birth by which their life is regenerated by the power of God's Holy Spirit (John 3:3-6, Titus 3:5). From that time forth the regenerated person has God's Holy Spirit dwelling within them enabling them to live a holy life (1 Corinthians 3:16, 2 Peter 1:3-4). Also giving them power to be witnesses for Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8).

8. **The promise of the Father.** All believers are entitled to the promise of the Father and the baptism in the Holy Spirit according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the normal experience in the early Christian Church. With it comes a deeper spiritual life and service, the bestowment of the gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4, 1 Corinthians 12:1-31). This wonderful experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth (Acts 10:44-46, Acts 11:14-16, Acts 15:7-9).

9. **Sanctification.** The scriptures teach a life of holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. By the power of the Holy Spirit we are able to obey the command, "Be holy, for I am holy." Sanctification is the will of God for all believers, and should be pursued by walking in obedience to God's Holy Spirit. Sanctification is experienced in basically three ways:
 1. **Instant or positional sanctification.** This is what happens to every person who puts their trust in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we are saved through faith in Jesus, we are sanctified in the eyes of God through the blood of the cross. As God the Father looks at us, He sees the holiness of Jesus, which is imputed to us, and does not see our sin (Hebrews 10:10, Hebrews 14).
 2. **Progressive or practical sanctification.** This is the process by which we strive to live on a day to day basis by considering ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in holy living through the power of God's divine nature within our lives (Romans 6; Philippians 2:12, Philippians 2:13, 2 Peter 1:3, 2 Peter 1:4).
 3. **Final sanctification.** This is when we are totally set free from the presence of sin within our life after seeing Jesus our Lord and being made like Him because of seeing Him as He really is in all His glory (1 John 3:2).

- 10. The church.** The church is the body of Christ, the habitation of God through the spirit with divine appointments for the fulfillment of her great commission. Each believer, born of the spirit, is an integral part of the church, which is written in heaven (Ephesians 1:22, Ephesians 1:23, Ephesians 2:22, Hebrews 12:23).
- 11. The ministry and evangelism.** A divinely called and scripturally ordained ministry has been provided by our Lord for the evangelization of the world and the edifying of the body of Christ (Mark 16:15-20, Ephesians 4:11-13).
- 12. Divine healing.** Deliverance from sickness is provided for us in the atonement, and is the privilege of all believers (Isaiah 53:4, Isaiah 53:5, Matthew 8:16, Matthew 8:17).
- 13. The blessed hope.** The resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in Christ and their translation, together with those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, is the imminent and blessed hope of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 1 Thessalonians 4:17, Titus 2:12, 1 Corinthians 15:51, Romans 8:23).
- 14. The millennial reign of Jesus.** The revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, the salvation of national Israel, and the millennial reign of Christ on earth are the scriptural promise and the world's hope (2 Thessalonians 1:17, Revelation 19:11-14, Romans 11:26, Romans 11:27, Revelation 20:1-7).
- 15. The lake of fire.** The devil and his angels, the beast and the false prophet, and whoever not found written in the Book of Life, shall be consigned to everlasting punishment in the lake, which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Revelation 19:20, Revelation 20:10-15).
- 16. The new heavens and the new earth.** We, "according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21, Revelation 22).
- 17. Jesus is the Only Way.** Jesus is the only way to heaven and of salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). He is the narrow gate through which we must enter, all other ways lead to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14).

Bylaws

(insert name of church)

For the purpose of establishing and maintaining a place for the worship of the one true God; to provide for Christian fellowship for those of like precious faith, irrespective of social position or worldly possessions; for the propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ both in home and foreign lands, this church shall be governed by the following Constitution:

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENT:

That, we, the undersigned have this day voluntarily associated ourselves together for the purpose of forming a corporation under the Laws of the State of (insert state), and we hereby certify:

ARTICLE I

(insert name of church)

As stated in the Articles of Incorporation, the name of the corporate church shall be (insert name of church).

ARTICLE II

PURPOSES AND POWERS

THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH THIS CORPORATION IS FORMED ARE:

1. To establish a Biblical Christian Church with a School of the Bible department and with missionary, literature, educational and all other departments it may deem useful to propagate and practice the full Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and for its service to the community.
2. It is one purpose of this local church corporation to earnestly seek and promote the unity of God's people in the Scriptural manner of Godly love, respect and faithful voluntary cooperation with liberty. To that end it shall associate and cooperate freely with other churches and with church organizations.

3. To act as Trustee under any trust incidental to the principal objects of the corporation and to receive, hold, administer and expend funds and property subject to such trust.
4. To enter into, make, perform and carry out contracts of every kind for any lawful purpose without limit as to amount and with any person, firm, association or corporation; to draw, make, accept, endorse, discount, issue and execute promissory notes, warrants and other negotiable or transferable interests.
5. To take, purchase or otherwise acquire; to own, hold, occupy, use and enjoy, manage, improve, develop and work; to grant, sell, exchange, let, demise and otherwise dispose of real estate, buildings; and improvements and every right, interest and estate therein without limit as to the amount thereof and wheresoever the same may be situated; to erect, construct, alter and repair buildings; to assume any and every kind of contract, agreement and obligation by or with any person, firm, corporation or association, or any Federal, State or other Government for the erection, construction, alteration, repair, renewal, equipment, improvement, development, use, enjoyment, leasing, management or control of any buildings, improvements or structures of any kind wherever the same may be situated.
6. To purchase or otherwise acquire, to own, hold, use and enjoy, to sell, assign and transfer, exchange or otherwise dispose of, deal in or deal with personal property of every kind and description without limit as to the amount thereof and wheresoever the same may be situated.
7. To borrow and to loan money and to give and to receive evidence of indebtedness and security thereof; to draw, make accept, endorse, execute, and issue promissory notes, warrants, and other debentures of the corporation, or otherwise to make guarantees of every kind and secure any or all obligations of the corporation by mortgage, trust deed or otherwise.
8. To do all other acts necessary or expedient for the administration of the affairs and attainment of the purposes of the corporation and to have and exercise all the powers now or hereafter conferred by the Laws of the State of Your State, upon non-profit corporations.

ARTICLE III

A NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

This corporation is organized pursuant to the General Non-Profit Corporation Law of the State of (insert your state); the property of this corporation is irrevocably dedicated to religious and charitable purposes, and upon liquidation, dissolution, or abandonment, shall not inure to the benefit of any private person except a fund, foundation, or corporation organized and operated for religious or charitable purposes and as designated in Article X of this Constitution.

ARTICLE IV

ORDINANCES

(A) The ordinance of Baptism by immersion in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost as commanded in the Scriptures, shall be administered to all those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of their souls and who give clear evidence of their fruit (Matthew 28:19, Colossians 2:12).

(B) The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed regularly as a part of public worship, as commanded by the Lord (Luke 22:19, 20; I Corinthians 11:23-26).

PRIVILEGES

(C) Infants and small children may be dedicated to the Lord in the church upon the request of the parents or guardians (Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15, 16).

(D) The ministrations of laying on of hands accompanied with the anointing with oil, for the healing of the sick, shall be granted as a request is made and the need may require (Mark 16:18; James 5:14).

ARTICLE V

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in (insert name of church) shall be eligible to all who give evidence to their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and who voluntarily hold to the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. When a person chooses to to be a part of (insert name of church) and involve themselves they are automatically considered a member (Ephesians 4:16). A member is one who attends regularly, serves at and contributes financially to (insert name of church).

ARTICLE VI

OFFICERS

The officers of (insert name of church) shall consist of a President, a Vice-President, and Secretary-Treasurer. The pastor shall be considered the President of the Corporation. There shall not be less than three (3) and no more than nine (9) officers (directors) at any time. The board of directors shall handle the business of the church and therefore should be business minded. They should see into the spiritual side of all business as well. These should lay hold of the vision given them and see it is implemented.

PASTOR AND PRESIDENT

Section 1. Term of Office: The Pastor is the President of the Corporation. He is also an Elder holding the office of pastor. He shall hold this office until his death or until he resigns.

Section 2. Vacancy of Pastorate: The vacancy shall be filled by the appointment of a new pastor by the departing pastor or the Board of Elders when the departing pastor is not available to do so. In some cases a Pulpit Search Committee may be selected who will search for pastoral candidates and submit them to the departing pastor and/or elders for final approval. In most cases, when able, it is best to follow the examples set forth in scripture of the person called by God (pastor or other five-fold minister) to pass the mantle on to the one God has chosen and shown him (Joshua 1, 1 Kings 19:19-21, 2 Kings 2:1-14). Imparting the anointing and call of God to the one who has already proven themselves to be faithful (2 Timothy 2:2, Luke 16:12).

Section 3. Duties of Pastor: The Pastor shall be considered the spiritual overseer of the church and shall direct all the church activities. He shall preside over all business meetings of the church and shall be an ex-officio member of all committees and departments.

Section 4. Support of Pastor: The Pastor shall be supported according to his needs, either by free-will offerings or by stated allowance as shall be decided upon by the Directors and/or Elders in its regular business sessions.

VICE-PRESIDENT

The Vice-President of the Corporation shall also be an Elder. He must be one who is trusted by the pastor with adequate business and leadership gifts to take charge in the Pastor/President's absence. He shall be appointed by the Pastor and ratified by the Elders.

SECRETARY-TREASURER

The Secretary-Treasurer of the Corporation shall be appointed by the Pastor and ratified by the Elders. A secretary or administrative assistant may be utilized in the day-to-day record keeping (accounts receivable and payable) as is necessary.

DIRECTORS

Directors shall be appointed by the Pastor and ratified by the Elders. The Board of Elders shall fill the office of Directors and officers of the Corporation when qualified persons are lacking to fill such positions.

BOARD OF ELDERS

The Board of Elders shall be appointed by the Pastor. There shall not be less than three (3) and no more than nine (9). They are to be called upon to fill the pulpit, to pray for the sick, visit newcomers, shut-ins, absentees, and hospital visitation. They shall also, along with the Pastor, seek God's direction for the church, and support the pastor in the vision given him by God, in the church's present and future ministry. Elders shall remain so until they resign or are deemed unfit.

Requirements: An Elder must be (insert specific requirements) and a member of (insert name of church).

DEACONS

The Pastor and/or Board of Elders shall appoint the Board of Deacons. There shall never be less than four members on the Board of Deacons. The Board of Deacons shall act in conjunction with and to aid the Pastor in all matters of (insert name of church here). They shall act in the determination of the meeting of material needs (i.e., food, clothing, financial, etc.) of any one who might seem to be in need whether they are a part of the Church or not. They may also aid the Pastor in any of the ordinances.

Requirements: A Deacon must be (insert specific requirements) and a member of (insert name of church).

In case of a lack of qualified persons to fill the Board of Deacons, the Elders shall act as the Deacons until the Board of Deacons is established.

BOARD OF USHERS

A Board of Ushers shall be installed in the annual business meeting of (insert name of church). The Pastor and President of (insert name of church) shall appoint a chairman to act as the head of the Board of Ushers. The duties of the Board of Ushers shall be as follows:

1. To see that the church is always in order for services.
2. To assist the Pastor in every way possible during the process of meetings.
3. To prepare for the comfort of everyone in attendance.
4. To maintain order and discipline throughout the church. The Pastor, Board of Deacons and the appointed chairman of the Board of Ushers shall appoint members to serve on the Board of Ushers. They shall be appointed to serve for one year. These men may succeed themselves indefinitely.

COMMUNION BOARD

The Board of Deacons and the Board of Elders shall act as the Communion Board. One man shall be appointed to serve as Chairman of the Communion Board. It shall be his duty to make arrangements for the preparation and serving of communion when announced by the Pastor.

VACANCY OF OFFICES

The Pastor and President of the Corporation shall have the authority to declare any office vacant. Grounds for such action shall be:

1. Failure to cooperate with the church's program and ministry.

2. Unscriptural conduct.
3. Doctrinal departure from the tenets of faith.
4. For any good and sufficient cause. Any incumbent under charges shall have opportunity for a fair and impartial hearing before the joint meeting of the Board of Elders shall be considered final and the incumbent may have no further recourse.

ARTICLE VII

MEETINGS

Section 1. Meetings for Worship. Meetings for public worship shall be held on each Lord's Day and during the week as may be provided for under the direction of the Pastor.

Section 2. Annual business meeting. There shall be an Annual Business Meeting of (insert name of church). This business meeting shall be held at the end of the fiscal year. This meeting shall be conducted in the auditorium of (insert name of church). New officers, elders and deacons shall be installed and all reports shall be read at the Annual Business Meeting.

Section 3. Special business meetings. Special business meetings of the legal members may be called by the pastor or by written petition of three-fourths (3/4) of the legal membership.

Section 4. Notice of business meetings. Written notice of the date and place of the Annual Business Meeting and of any special business meetings shall be sent by regular mail to all active members at least ten (10) days and not more than thirty days prior to such meeting. In addition, the pastor shall announce such meeting at the worship services of (insert name of church) at least ten (10) days prior to such meeting.

Section 5. Quorum. No record of any special or regular business meetings of (insert name of church) shall be made unless one-half (1/2) or more legal members are present to constitute a quorum.

Section 6. Order of Business. The regular order of business for the Annual Business Meeting of (insert name of church) shall be as follows:

1. Devotional.
2. Reading of previous minutes.
3. Report of the treasurer.
4. Report of committees.
5. Unfinished business.
6. Installation of officers.
7. New business.
8. Adjournment.

This order of business may be altered or suspended at any meeting by a majority vote of the members present. The usual parliamentary rules as laid down in "Robert's Rules of Order" shall govern all debates when not in conflict with this Constitution.

ARTICLE VIII

FINANCES

1. All funds needed for the maintenance of (insert name of church) shall be provided by voluntary contributions, tithes and offerings. Every member shall decide before God what he or she can cheerfully give to the support of the Lord's work at home and in the foreign field (Malachi 3:10, I Corinthians 16:1-2; Romans 12:8).
2. All offerings shall be counted by at least two members.
3. Deposits must be made by (insert name of church) promptly in a local bank.
4. A separate account will be established for (insert name of church).
5. Annual reports will be furnished to the officers and made available to the membership.
6. Two signature checks are to be used.
7. The treasurer must be a board member (officer/director). However, a secretary or administrative assistant may be utilized in the day-to-day record keeping as necessary.

8. Financial records, without exception, are to be kept in the church office.

9. The Pastor shall act as overseer of all financial activities.

ARTICLE IX

DEPARTMENTS AND COMMITTEES

The church shall provide for the establishment of a School of the Bible Department, young people's work, relief committees, home and foreign missionary committees, and any other departments or committees as the needs of the work may require. These committees and departments shall be subordinate to the church and shall contribute to the harmony and development of the whole. They shall be under the general supervision of the Board of Elders. The pastor shall be an ex-official member of all committees or departments and shall determine when the need for such committees and departments must be organized.

ARTICLE X

PROPERTY

The Officers of (insert name of church) shall have power to carry out all of the purposes and powers set forth in Article II. The President and the Secretary-Treasurer's signature shall be sufficient certificate for negotiating any and all of the provided powers in said Articles.

ARTICLE XI

AMENDMENT

This Constitution may be amended or changed by a two thirds (2/3) vote of the officers (directors) at any regular or special meeting called for that purpose, provided due notice of such proposed change shall have been made.

ARTICLE XII

ORGANIZATION

Said organization is organized exclusively for charitable, religious and educational purposes, including the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

ARTICLE XIII

CONDUCT OF ORGANIZATION

No part of the net earnings of the organization shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the organization shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in the purpose clause hereof. No substantial part of the activities of the organization shall be the carrying of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the organization shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any other provision of this document, the organization shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by an organization exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or (b) by an organization, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

ARTICLE XIV

DISSOLUTION

Upon the dissolution of the organization, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not disposed of shall be disposed of by the Court of common pleas of the county in which the principal office of the organization is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

The Five-fold Ministry

The gifts God gives to the body of Christ can be divided into three categories. “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Romans 12:4-5). Below is a basic outline of the gifts God gives His people.

Motivational Gifts (Roman 12:1-8)

After conversion every believer is given a motivational gift to be used to strengthen, encourage and edify the body of Christ. These are listed in Romans 12:6-8. These are gifts that a believer is naturally motivated toward after they have been born again. These gifts may be fine tuned and sharpened by the Holy Spirit with use over time, but they are what a person is naturally inclined toward after conversion.

Manifestations (1Corinthians 12: 4-11)

Paul referred to these as both spirituals and manifestations. “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant” (1 Corinthians 12:1). The word “gifts” here was added by the translators. It should more accurately be “now concerning spirituals, brethren.” He goes on to refer to these spirituals as manifestations. Paul says, “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all” (1 Corinthians 12:7).

These are non-abiding gifts used by an individual believer only when the Holy Spirit chooses. These spirituals or manifestation are not used at will. “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills” (1 Corinthians 12:11). You may be used in one of the manifestations once or numerous times. They are to operate only as “He wills” (1 Corinthians 12:11). We must simply be a willing vessel.

Ministers (Ephesians 4:11-16)

These are often referred to as the “fivefold ministry” and are office gifts. “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office” (Romans 12:4). These are people God has gifted and placed in one of the offices for the church. Actually, the men and women themselves are the gifts. It would do God’s people good to understand that the person God has placed over them is a gift from God to their local body.

The Five-fold Ministry

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13). The five-fold ministry can interestingly be illustrated with the fingers of our hand. Each finger represents a different office.

1. Apostle. An Apostle is a foundation layer, pioneer or entrepreneur within the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:10). This office is represented by the thumb, as the thumb can easily touch each of the other fingers on a person’s hand. This office flows in and out of each of the five-fold offices as needed. By virtue of being a foundation layer, they (out of necessity) must operate in all the other offices at times. When beginning a work or ministry, the other offices or gifts have not been raised up yet so the apostle must function in and out of all five.

It’s important to note in the authority given them as a foundation layer, there are many apostles in the church today. However, a distinction must be made between apostles today and the original New Testament apostles. While the original apostles had the authority to set forth doctrine (write inspired scripture – 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20-21), apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastors, and teachers today simply expound on what has already been given to us by the original apostles. Apostles today do not have authority to set forth doctrine as the original twelve did. They are merely foundation layers.

2. Prophet. Prophets speak for God to the church and are usually called to speak to the church as a whole. This office is very different from the spirituals or manifestations spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. These are not someone simply giving a prophetic utterance (1 Corinthians 14:3), though they do at times, but these are men or women who hold the office of a prophet. Many within the body may be used by God to give a prophetic utterance and not hold the office of a prophet. This office or gift can be illustrated best by the index finger –

pointing, speaking strongly and often in rebuke to the church.

3. Evangelist. This office/gift can be illustrated by the middle finger because it is the farthest reaching. Evangelists are soul winners, but there may be many in the body of Christ who have a burden to win souls who do not hold this office. Evangelists are not primarily soul winners, but are called to stir up the church and move its people into action. Many confuse this office and think an evangelist's job is exclusively soul winning, but that is not their primary function. Much of their challenge is to encourage the church and its people to get behind their pastor, his vision, and all God is calling him and the church to do and be.

There has usually been one "world evangelist" in every generation that God raised up as a soul winner to the masses. He has usually had a unique gifting in seeing people won to Christ and acclimated into the local church. There have been many such men in past generations. Ours has without a doubt been Billy Graham. It is very likely that Billy Graham's replacement may be Greg Laurie of Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside, CA and Harvest Crusades. He has a unique gift to teach the Word in the most simple way and hundreds respond to accept Jesus, many of them young people.

4. Pastor. The office of the Pastor can be illustrated by the ring finger in that he is married to the church, which is his life and passion. They are committed to and their heart has been given to the church. Notice, "He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11). "Some pastors and teachers" – he did not say, as in the other offices/gifts, "some pastors and some teachers." This is significant, because it is very probably one gift. Every pastor must be a teacher, but not every teacher is a pastor.

5. Teacher. Again, every pastor should be a teacher but not every teacher is a pastor. The teacher's heart is for truth. Their desire is to dissect the Word of God to make sure the church thoroughly understands the truth of scripture. This office gift is best illustrated by our little finger. It is able to get into those hard to reach places and dig around. A teacher's heart and passion is for truth. They are often expositors, theologians or have a specific burden and emphasis is some special area of truth to teach the body of Christ.

Should a Woman be a Pastor?

What does the Bible say about women being in ministry, pastors and church leaders? 1 Timothy 2:12 says, "I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise (usurp) authority over a man." The key point here is the usurping of authority over men. Typically, not exclusively, when a woman is the pastor of a church, women tend to be the leaders in the families of that church rather than the men. This is especially true in smaller churches where a woman is the pastor.

While this is obviously contrary to scripture, the problem isn't that a woman is in a position of leadership, but that a man isn't doing it. Henry Ironside was approached by someone after seeing a woman preaching and they said to him, "Isn't that a shame?" Ironside responded, "It sure is a shame. It's a shame a man isn't doing it."

Daughters Shall Prophecy

Peter prophesied, "It shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17). Notice it says your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.

According to your perspective on prophecy, they were definitely ministering publicly. Combining Acts 2:17 with 1 Timothy 2:12 could mean that a woman can minister and/or pastor as long as she is under the authority of her husband and the male leadership of the church. My pastor and overseer in ministry taught that a woman could pastor as long as she had a strong male board of elders over her.

Pastor or preacher?

We must also keep in mind that being a pastor and preaching are two totally different things. There have been many successful women in ministry. Women who have won many to Christ, edified and strengthened the church. Deborah brought great victory in Judges 4 and 5 as one of the great Judges of Israel. We see nothing of God rebuking her for taking charge. Again, the problem in Judges was that a man didn't step up.

Today, one who is no doubt being used of God as a Bible teacher is Joyce Meyer. Regardless of what you think about women in ministry, many have been and are being used of God to affect people's lives for His glory. God is glorified anytime the Word of God is being taught or preached and lives are being changed for the better. There is an important distinction between a woman as a Bible teacher or evangelist and one being a pastor.

Make Disciples of all Nations

As long as they are doctrinally sound, the gospel is being preached, and the Word of God taught or proclaimed, who am I to say they shouldn't be in ministry? We are commanded to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15) and "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Again, as long as they are doctrinally sound, the gospel is being preached, the Word of God taught, and people are being saved, I say, go for it! The problem scripturally is, not women being in ministry and preaching or teaching the Word of God but with the usurping of authority over men (1 Timothy 2:12, KJV).

The Pastor's Responsibility to the Church

The privilege and responsibility God gives pastors is to shepherd those who belong to Him. It's a great honor, and also a heavy weight. 1 Peter 5:2 tells us pastors or shepherds should "feed the flock of God." In Acts 20:28 Paul challenged the elders of Ephesus to "be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

What a proof text for the divinity of Christ! It was Jesus who died on the cross, yet Paul said God paid the price for the church with His own blood. Jesus, who was God, paid the penalty for our sins on the cross. Let's not take it lightly. If the church was so valued by God that He shed His blood for it, we should always give it our best. "I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). Below are a few responsibilities of pastors.

Feed the Flock

We must make sure the church gets a healthy diet of God's word. This is why Paul told Timothy to "study to show yourself approved a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightfully dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). If you are going to properly feed God's people you will have to spend much time in diligent study. Don't just throw a message together. God and His people deserve better than that.

I feel expository teaching and preaching accomplishes this best. Even when preaching on a specific topic you can find a passage that deals with that particular topic and give an exposition of it. If you take your people through a book of the Bible, verse by verse, you will be forced to deal with everything in it, and will give your people a balanced diet of the Word. You will also be protecting yourself from extremes.

This takes a lot of work, but is one of my favorite things to do. I especially like those passages that are hard to deal with, the ones most preachers tend to skip over. When doing an exposition of a passage I typically use at least 3-7 commentaries. I take one passage at a time and thoroughly study each commentary. I write down everything that seems significant then read over the notes while prayerfully meditating on the passage. Little by little, the Holy Spirit gives me an understanding of the text and how it applies to the church, people's lives, and the vision God has for that local body.

A general outline for study should include the background, setting and customs of the time, the meaning of the passage, practical applications, and the exhortation to put what they've learned into practice. Your people need to understand the Word, but they also need to see how it applies to their lives. Most of our time should be spent in practical application. The background and interpretation prepares the way for the application and exhortation. There is one interpretation of scripture but many applications. Let's properly equip ourselves to feed the flock of God.

Another way to insure your people are properly fed is through guest ministries. Let's face it, people need something fresh once in a while. Bring in individuals and groups you know will minister well to your church body. It's good to have varying styles to give them some diversity. Music as well as preaching and teaching ministries can be used. Bringing in guests will help your church grow. Guest ministries and special events are easy ways for members to invite people to the church. If done regularly, over a period of time people will start to see something is happening at your church.

Training leaders in the church is another way to make sure your people are being fed. 2 Timothy 2:2 says, "The same impart (entrust) to faithful men, who will also be able to teach others." You can't do it all yourself. God will give you people who are gifted and with your help will be able to teach and preach the Word of God alongside you. It's important to make sure people you raise up are faithful to your ministry. If not, division could arise.

It's easy for people to let things go to their head. That's why Paul said leaders should be not a novice or new convert lest they "become conceited and fall into the condemnation" (1 Timothy 3:6). Warn, encourage and watch over them. You can train leaders in a small group setting or by giving them an opportunity to minister in a public service. Start with an offertory or brief devotional then gradually move them to full messages. An added benefit is have people who are equipped to fill in when you're on vacation or out of town.

Guard the Flock

Paul, when leaving Ephesus, gathered the leaders together and said, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock, and from your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore be on alert" (Acts 20:29-31a). Jesus made it clear that an identifying factor of a true shepherd is that they defend the flock against wolves (John 10:12-13).

There will be those who attempt to lead your people astray. It's up to us as pastors to properly feed and train our people to have discerning spirits so when someone is being deceptive or divisive they will be able to stop it before any are affected. It's up to the pastor to fight against such wolves with every thing he has. If we don't stop it right away, the turmoil that will be ahead of us will be overwhelming.

Be alert and watch, you never know when they may rise up or who they may be. It may someone who just finished pledging their support and loyalty to you, so beware. Shortly after the people praised Jesus on Palm Sunday they were crying out "crucify him, crucify him" (Luke 23:20). Paul and Barnabas, after the lame man was healed, could barely restrain the people from sacrificing to them as gods. When they were not allowed to sacrifice to them, they wanted to stone them (Acts 14:8-19). The one patting you on the back today could be stabbing you tomorrow.

Often it isn't someone coming from outside bringing in false doctrine, but someone from within trying to plant negative seeds and cast doubt about leadership. It will often go something like this, "What do think about the pastor's message today? What do you think about the direction the church is taking? What do you think about the worship leader? I really think it'd be better if they did it like this. I'm not sure if this might have been a better way to go. Did you hear this about so and so?" We must teach people to look out for things like this and put a stop to it. By the time it gets to the pastor, the damage has probably already been done. Negative seeds, even if not believed, have a way of coming to fruition. Romans 16:17 says, "Mark them which cause division and offenses contrary to the doctrine you have learned; and avoid them."

This battle usually begins with envy, bitterness, or a desire to be noticed and feel important (James 3:13-17). Once it moves from the heart and through the tongue, a fire has started that can blaze out of control. James 3:5-6 says, "Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things, behold how great a matter a little fire kindles. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, so is the tongue among our members that defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature and is set on fire of hell."

Gossip will defile the whole body. It begins with a few people, but quickly spreads until the entire church is destroyed. The devil knows it's not the battles that come from outside the church that destroy us – they make us stronger. It's the battles from within that get us. James 3:15 says, "This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual and devilish." When someone tries to draw people away, remember where it's coming from and don't allow the devil to take advantage of you by being "ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Sources of false wisdom:

- It's earthly. It comes from this world, not from above.
- It's sensual. It originates from our fleshly desires, not the Spirit of God.
- It's devilish. It comes straight from the devil himself.

Give Yourself to the Flock

To minister in a way that pleases God you must give yourself for those to whom you minister. Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). "The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). John wrote, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). Paul wrote concerning himself as a pastor and apostle, "So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own soul because you were dear unto us" (1Thessalonians 2:8).

Paul gave his heart to those to whom he ministered. For many, being a pastor is just a job. It's not a calling, but a vocation or occupation for them. This must not be the case. If we aren't called of God, we shouldn't be there. We must not preach the gospel only, but in doing so we must also give our heart and soul to them. This is not easy. It has with it much danger. When we give people a part of us, it makes us vulnerable. It's easy to open ourselves up and get hurt. When people criticize, gossip, get mad, or leave the church it rips your heart out. This is why many pastors just "do their job." We must allow the Holy Spirit to tenderize our heart so we can give ourselves to the church. God expects nothing less.

Be Dedicated

If God has called you into the ministry, total dedication is required. In Luke 14:25-33 Jesus demands full surrender and commitment in every area of our life. God must be first in:

- Our relationships (Luke 14:26).

- Our flesh and personal ambition (Luke 14:26).
- Our possessions (Luke 14:33).

Matthew 6:24 says, “No man can serve two masters, either he will hate the one love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” It’s difficult to be in the ministry and work a secular job at the same time. Your interest will inevitably be divided. Paul is usually used as a reference to being a tent maker, but he only did that for a few brief periods then went back to the ministry. Some pastors need to be bi-vocational for a while, but it shouldn’t be for very long. As soon as the ministry begins to grow, you must take a step of faith. Often either the church isn’t willing to make the commitment to their pastor, or the pastor isn’t willing to step in faith and leave the security of his job.

There will be lean times and times of blessing, and we must make the commitment of faith to trust God in it all. 2 Corinthians 5:7 says, “We walk by faith, not by sight.” Hebrews 10:38 says, “The just shall live by faith.” When Jesus called the disciples in Mark 1:16-20, they immediately left all and followed him. When Elisha was called while plowing he sacrificed the oxen and burned all the implements and followed Elijah (1 Kings 19:19-21). He burnt all bridges to the past so there was no turning back. Peter asked in John 6:68, “Lord, to whom (or where) shall we go?”

Go After the Wayward

The Bible makes it clear that people are prone toward drifting and falling away. Isaiah 53:6 says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.” 1 Peter 2:25 says, “You were continually straying like sheep.” This is a heavy responsibility on pastors. We can’t make people come to church and be faithful, but we do have a responsibility to go after them and bring them back into the fold. Jesus made this abundantly clear in the parables of the lost sheep, coin and son in Luke 15. Once we’ve done all we can, we must “commend them to God and the word of His grace” (Acts 20:32).

This should be the natural tendency of a shepherd. Jesus said, “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing” (Luke 15:4-5). There would be a lot more rejoicing in the church if we could bring back all those who have drifted away and slipped through the cracks.

This indicates that the shepherd grabbed the sheep while it was still running. He throws it on his shoulder and brings it home to the fold while it was still offering resistance. There are so

many people who have gone through problems, discouragement and even fallen into sin, and no one has gone after them. I'm not referring to those who leave the church mad and go down the road to another church. You should never go after those folks. I'm talking about those who have fallen out of church and drifted from the things of God. Those you must go after.

Many people who once loved the Lord have fallen away and haven't even received a phone call from the church. I realize the pastor can't call and go after everyone himself, especially as the church grows, but people should be trained to help the pastor go after wayward sheep. As the church grows, leaders should be raised up with people under their care. When they see a member has missed a number of weeks they should give them a call and set up a time to meet with them. They should find out if anything is wrong and ask what they can do to help. This will take commitment and organization. Faithful shepherding has become a lost art in the church today. The pastor or someone on the pastoral staff should stay in touch with the leaders to make sure they are remaining faithful to the task given them.

Flee Temptation

The enemy knows if he's able to strike the shepherd the sheep will be scattered and left without protection. Paul told Timothy to "flee these things" (1 Timothy 6:11) and again "flee youthful lust" (2 Timothy 2:22). The devil knows your areas of weakness. You must be on guard continually, especially when you think you're on top of everything. 1 Corinthians 10:12 says, "Wherefore, let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." Below are a few things pastors and church leaders must avoid.

- **Discouragement.** Discouragement is the greatest threat people in the ministry face. It doesn't just hit small, struggling ministries, it also targets large, flourishing ones. It comes from a myriad of different places and sources. It may be like Elijah that we feel alone (Romans 11:3) or believe we can't fulfill the vision the Lord has given us. Below are a few ways to avoid discouragement.
 - Have a support group of pastors you meet with regularly for prayer and encouragement. One church I planted was not going well. It was the weekly time I had meeting with a small group of ministers that pulled me through. It's also good to have regular times with your wife where you simply enjoy yourselves and have fun together. Foolish is the man or woman who thinks they are so spiritual they don't need this.

- Draw your strength from God. It's easy during these times to get overwhelmed and want to give up. When the temptation is there to sink into a pit of discouragement, you will have to do as David did when he had lost all and everyone was blaming him for their problems. 1 Samuel 30:6 says, "But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." Giving in to this temptation will cause you to miss out on all God has for you. It was shortly after this that David became king. What would have happened if he had given up? Never give up!
- **Financial indiscretions.** In your ministry make sure everything is always above board and that you are free from accusation. I know many have no choice at the beginning of a ministry but to handle the finances themselves. As soon as possible, get an administrative assistant or someone to take care of the books under your oversight. Always have two ushers count the offering together and have a slip each signs verifying the amount.

The bookkeeper should also count it and give a report to the pastor. This gives multiple checks and balances cutting down the chance for accusation. Also, make sure you clear all expenses beyond the normal bills through the board with signed minutes on file in case any questions arise. This way you cover yourself and silence accusations.

As for the minister's personal finances, do your best to stay clear of debt as much as possible. Ministry positions offer deductions that aren't available for other professions. Make sure you have a good accountant familiar with clergy tax laws that can lead you through this process. Keep copies of any correspondence you have with the IRS. If you don't have things in writing, it can easily come back to haunt you.

- **Sexual temptation.** I don't care who you are, what you look like, or how charismatic you may or may not be, there will be temptation. Some people will be attracted to you just because you are in the ministry. Most in the ministry are there, at least in part, because they have a passionate personality, which makes you particularly susceptible to this area of temptation. Below are a few suggestions to help keep you safe in this area.
 1. Have an open door policy. Never have a lock on your office door. Let it be known that anyone can enter your office at any time.
 2. Beware of flattery and excessive praise. As men, we have an ego that not only likes but also needs to be ministered to. Stay away from anyone of the opposite sex who flatters you beyond a brief word of encouragement. Women see the pastor caring for the people and often see in him everything their husband isn't. Run from this as fast as

you can! The temptation will be there to want to soak it all in, especially if you aren't getting this kind of attention at home. Wise is the wife who builds her husband up at home so he has no need to look for it elsewhere. The same holds true for women in the ministry, except women tend to develop more emotional relationships, which can be just as damaging as a physical affair

3. Beware of Internet and social media traps. It's very easy to access pornography and temptation online. It's also easy to get involved in an online affair, and no one knows, or so you think. I have friends who have paid a huge price because of online indiscretions. Another trap is spending too much time participating in social networks like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. This also includes exchanging personal emails, texts and messages. I know people who became addicted to their "virtual" world. Eventually, a relationship developed which led to a physical affair. Just ask the thousands of pastors and their wives whose churches and lives were destroyed after photos, emails, texts, Facebook posts, and cell phone logs were distributed to the congregation.
4. Maintain intimacy in your marriage. There is no better way to thwart off sexual temptation than having a good sexual relationship with your mate. The more open and free you can be with one another the better. I believe with all my heart God meant for it to be this way between a husband and wife. The sad thing is, few have such a relationship. If you don't you are in serious danger, no matter how spiritual you are. If we don't take care of each other spiritually, emotionally and physically, someone or something else will. Work on it, get help, do whatever is necessary to get your sexual relationship where it needs to be before tragedy has an opportunity to strike.

Maintain Confidentiality

Whether in counseling or casual conversation, confidentiality for the pastor and his wife is imperative. Every precaution must be taken to keep everything told to you in confidence to yourself. Pastors must never get caught up in gossip of any kind. The pastor's entire ministry could be ruined if he doesn't keep things to himself. At the very least, trust in you and your ministry will be damaged if you ever violate confidentiality. This can make or brake your ministry. Ministry hinges on your people's ability to trust you.

When I was young in the ministry I started two youth outreach centers for non-churched, at risk youth. One of the centers was located above a music store. There were also other businesses located around us. Being upstairs, it was hard to keep a close eye on the kids once they left our place. Some of the businesses began to complain about kids hanging around outside. They weren't doing anything wrong, they were just lingering around. After

complaining to our landlord, he asked us to find another place for our center. This was potentially devastating to our ministry. Our place was very reasonably priced, and we hadn't been able to find any place else that we could afford.

While praying over our dilemma, I felt led to ask two local detectives for help. They liked what we were trying to do for the kids so I thought I would ask them to vouch for us with our landlord so we could remain where we were. When I approached them, they asked if I would do something for them as well. They asked me to keep my ears open and to tell them if I ever heard of the kids being involved with anything illegal. I said, absolutely not! If I did the kids wouldn't trust me and I wouldn't be able to help them. I told the officers I would always encourage them to do the right thing, but I couldn't divulge anything told to me in confidence. They understood and went to our landlord on our behalf. Consequently, we were able to stay where we were.

Set Office Hours

To properly shepherd your people you must be there for them. You need to have regular office hours so they know how and when to reach you. This also protects your home life. If people know there are set times when you are in the office, they are not as likely to bother you at home. Below are a few suggestions to fill your time at the office.

- **Prepare.** Study, read and research. This is where much of your preparation is done to properly feed your people. Research books of the Bible. In my first few years as a pastor I taught through a different book of the Bible every service and had three services a week. This laid a wonderful foundation. I don't have the time I did back then and that time of study gave me resources I can draw from today.
- **Pray.** Jesus said "My house shall be called a house of prayer" (Matthew 21:13). What better place to start than with the pastor who is to be setting the example and leading the way. 1 Samuel 12:23 says, "As for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way."
- **Plan.** Use your time in the office to plan, organize and develop vision for the church. You should continually be thinking of new ways to structure your church to allow for growth. In these hours the seeds of new and fresh ministries can be birthed to better enable you to meet the ongoing needs of the congregation and community.

Continue to Tithe

Pastors must set an example in tithing for their people if they want the blessing of God to be on their life and ministry. You can't expect your people to do what you are unwilling to do. God expects nothing less of His ministers. This should be one of your first priorities - your first fruit to God (Proverbs 3:9-10). This brings with it personal financial blessing (Malachi 3:8:10), blessing in ministry, spiritual insight, vision, and an understanding of the Word.

Jesus said, "If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon (money), who will commit to your trust the true riches (Luke 16:11)? The pastor's tithe can be given to the church in the general offering like everyone else. Many feel that it should be given elsewhere, otherwise the pastor is giving into his own ministry.

Below are a few options:

- The pastor's tithe can be set aside for guest ministries coming into the church. This enables you to increase the offerings you take up for the itinerant ministry so they are well taken care of.
- If you are affiliated with a particular fellowship or denomination you can designate your tithe there. Many feel this is scriptural since it is your spiritual covering.
- If you pastor an independent church, you might consider giving your tithe to a ministry you look to for personal feeding, encouragement and counsel. This too falls under the scriptural precedent since you are deriving at least part of your spiritual nourishment from this ministry. However, it is best to maintain consistency with one ministry.

Develop a Place of Sanctuary

To balance total dedication and love, pastors and their families must have a place of sanctuary. Typically, this is your home. A church parsonage sounds like a great deal, but the home being a place of sanctuary is nearly impossible in this scenario. Usually the parsonage is next to the church making it easy for congregants to stop by unannounced at any time. This makes it very difficult to have any down time. It's like being on call 24 hours a day.

At a pastor's conference a number of years ago, my overseer was speaking about this subject. He said he lived twenty miles from the church on purpose. He went on to say, in jest somewhat, "What am I suppose to do, let you kill me?" He was overstating the point a little, but declaring a truth none the less.

Pastors need to make sure their home is set apart for them and their family. Without this they can easily get burnt out. Everyone needs a degree of privacy and the pastor's household is no exception. They should be able to have alone and intimate times together without worrying about being interrupted. I wonder how many ministry marriages have fallen apart for this very reason.

The Church's Responsibility to Its Pastor

It's not just pastors and church leaders who have a responsibility to their church, the church also has a responsibility to their pastor and leaders. 1 Thessalonians 5:12 says, "Appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction." Many churches lose dedicated pastors and ministers because they feel neglected and unappreciated. Below are a few important things pastors need from their church and its people.

Cooperation and Support

Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey them that have rule over you, and submit yourselves unto them for they watch over your souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you." You can make your pastor's job a joy or full of grief. One will be profitable to you and the other will not. That said, you should not submit to anyone in blind obedience. 1 Peter 5:3 says, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage but examples to the flock."

Follow your pastor's direction as long as their leadership is consistent with scripture. If you don't agree, pray for them instead of criticizing and talking negatively. Let God deal with it. The Holy Spirit can do a much better job than we can.

Your pastor is accountable to God. God works through headship and not the other way around. God's government is more like the military. There are different levels of headship over various areas which are all subject to the commander and chief. Your pastor is in a headship position over the church, under Jesus, the chief shepherd (Ephesians 4:11-16). A pastor is like the central nervous system. He receives messages from the head (Jesus) and directs them to members of the body to be carried out. When this is reversed, problems arise.

Prayer and Spiritual Battles

The spiritual battles pastors and church leaders face are very difficult. That's why in 1 Timothy 2:1-2 Paul urges believers to pray for people in positions of authority. 1 Samuel 12:23 says, "Moreover, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." This applies to leaders praying for their people and also people praying for their leaders. We have no reason to complain or criticize when we see our pastor go through difficulty if we haven't been praying for them.

Can you imagine the feeling of support, encouragement and strength that's infused into a leader when he knows his people are praying for him? In Acts 4:24, the religious leaders had threatened Peter and his company "lifted up their voices to God in one accord." Imagine feeling the pressure of the threat just issued and all your people begin to cry out to God in a thunderous fashion. In Acts 12:5, Peter is arrested and thrown in prison, "But prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God." In Acts 12:12, he was miraculously released by an angel and goes to Mary's home and sees "many gathered together praying."

Let your pastor know you are praying for him. In the churches I've pastored we had a prayer meeting before each church service. When I heard people lifting their voices to God, praying fervently for the service, it supercharged me. It gave me boldness and courage to minister with boldness and confidence. Strengthen and encourage your pastor through prayer and the anointing of God will remove every burden and break every yoke of bondage (Isaiah 10:27).

Loyalty and Faithfulness

What a blessing faithful and loyal people are to a ministry. The sad thing is there are fewer faithful people in a typical church than those who are not. Scripture gives every indication that it has been this way from the beginning. In Ephesians 1:1, Paul addresses the Ephesians as "the saints which are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus."

In most churches, twenty percent of the members carry the entire burden of the ministry. The only way a pastor can accomplish what God called him to do is to have faithful and loyal people behind him. He can't do it alone. Psalm 12:1 says, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases to be, for the faithful disappear from among the sons of men." Many church "folk" talk a good talk but aren't there when the church needs them. Proverbs 20:6 says, "Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, but who can find a trustworthy man?" Proverbs 20:25 also says false declarations end up being a snare both spiritually and in the natural realm. "It is a snare for a man to devote rashly something as holy, and afterward to reconsider his vow."

How often have you made a commitment to the church and failed to follow through? Your pastor is depending on you. James 5:12 says, "Let your yes be yes, and your no, no." This includes your support during good times and bad. Many people are faithful, dedicated and loyal when things are going well in the church, but when things get hard, they're gone. What about when accusations are being hurled at your pastor? Do you stand firm in their defense? They need you whether what is being said is false, true or partially true. If you will be loyal and stand with them alongside God, you will have His support.

Isaiah 54:17 says, “No weapon formed against you shall prosper. And every tongue that rises up against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, And their righteousness is from Me, declares the Lord.” God will deal with anyone who come against His servants. Let’s always stand behind them in full support. God promises His blessing will be upon all those who are faithful. Proverbs 28:20 says, “A faithful man will abound with blessing.” The blessing will be there, just continue to stand firm with him through the rough times as well as the good. God will take care of anything that needs to be dealt with.

A Teachable Spirit

Proverbs 9:8-9 says, “Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate you, rebuke a wise man and he will love you, give instruction to a wise man and he will be yet wiser, teach a just man and he will increase in knowledge.” Having a teachable spirit is imperative if you want to be a blessing to the ministry and pastor. It’s very difficult to pastor someone who isn’t willing to learn. One of the purposes of having a pastor is for them to be a spiritual leader and mentor to you.

Church members unwilling to learn will never increase in knowledge. They will be a continual thorn in the pastor and leadership’s side. They fight everything the pastor tries to do. A resistant spirit can be felt. Often people have come to me and said they felt something was wrong but weren’t sure what it was. Usually when this happened there was someone with a resistant spirit I was battling with. They didn’t know what was going on, but could feel something taking place in the spiritual realm.

The essence of discipleship is that of a learner and follower. Jesus is looking for disciples and not religious church members. Many of those that fought so much with Jesus were charter members of the local synagogue. Most of them just wanted to argue and prove their point. There were a few like Nicodemus who really wanted to learn, but they were few and far between. The whole point of being a disciple is to learn from one and teach someone else the thing you learned.

Paul taught Timothy this principle in 2 Timothy 2:2, “The things you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” What any pastor really wants are disciples who have a thirst for learning and in turn take what they have learned to minister to others. If you want to truly bless a pastor, become a disciple.

This is one of the reasons people refuse to join a church and be faithful. They feel they have no need of being discipled. There’s not much that anyone can teach them. Pride is at the core

of this type of spirit and nothing good comes from it. On the other hand, it's the humble spirit that has a thirst for knowledge and feels they can always learn something new. This is the heart of a true disciple. It's this kind of attitude that is a real blessing to the pastor, church and its ministries. These are the kind of people that can be depended upon. They bring exceptional strength and support to the pastor.

Be a Blessing

The pastor gives of himself because he desires to be a blessing and usually isn't expecting anything in return. However, if something isn't given in return they may eventually become bitter and feel they are being taken advantage of. The Word is clear that we should bless those who have been a blessing to us.

Galatians 6:6 says, "Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches." Romans 15:27 says, "It hath pleased them verily and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things." It's a spiritual principle that we should bless those who have blessed us spiritually. We are indebted to them. This is not just financially, but can be in many different ways.

- 1. Send a card or note.** Paul said we should "share all good things with him who teaches" (Galatians 6:6). When your pastor or church leader has taught, said or done something that blessed you, let them know. Pastors often leave the pulpit feeling like a failure. They walk away from the service and the devil starts telling them how bad they did. One word of encouragement, from someone they have unknowingly ministered to, will break an accusing spirit. Let them know how much their ministry has blessed you.
- 2. Meals and getaways.** Take your pastor and his family out for a good meal. This was how pastors used to receive much of their pay from the church. Better yet, give them a gift certificate so they can take their family out alone. This can be done by different individuals in the church but can also be done by the church corporately from time to time. A good gesture would be for the church to pay for a couple days away for the pastor and his wife just to refresh themselves. Along with covering their motel and a few meals, take up an offering to cover some spending money. Every pastor needs a couple of days away at least every quarter, besides vacations, just to get out from under the spiritual pressures. Most people have no idea what kind of battles the average pastor and his family face on a daily basis.

- 3. Special offerings.** The church should look for special occasions to express their love with a special offering. Birthdays, Christmas, vacations, etc. let them know all they do for the church hasn't gone unnoticed. These offerings should be done enough in advance that people have time to plan ahead for what they are going to contribute. Preferably church leaders take charge and make sure everyone has an opportunity to participate. It's also a good idea to send a letter to church members with return envelopes so those who aren't always in attendance can participate.

Salary and Wages

Matthew 10:10 says, "The worker is worthy of his support." The Bible makes it clear that people who sow into people's lives spiritual things should be able to do so in hope of reaping material rewards (1 Corinthians 9:6-14, Romans 15:26-27). People in the ministry face pressure in spiritual and natural realms most can never comprehend. The last thing they need is the financial burden of figuring out how they're going to survive.

Pastors should make as much as any professional in the church or community. Paul said, "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching" (1 Timothy 5:17). It's clear from the context that "double honor" is referring to money or salary. If you take the average salary of the congregation, the pastor who works hard at preaching and teaching should make twice that. Churches that have a small budget should at least try to pay the pastor the average salary of the congregation.

Ministry Expenses

Pastors should not have to take money out of their personal finances to do their job properly. Any expenses they need to minister effectively should be reimbursed over and above their salary. Below are a few types of ministry expenses that can be reimbursed.

- 1. Auto expenses.** If the church isn't able to provide a car for the pastor, along with the expenses to operate the car, it should reimburse his mileage. The IRS has a set amount that's allotted per mile. Your pastor should receive at least that amount.
- 2. Conference expenses.** There are usually one or two conferences per year in most denominations and fellowships. The pastor and his wife should attend these for their personal enrichment, to rekindle vision, for training, and accountability. This is an expense the church or ministry should take care of. If the church doesn't have a credit card, receipts should be kept and everything that isn't prepaid should be reimbursed.

3. **Housing.** The IRS says pastors can receive a housing allowance above their salary that is nontaxable. The only thing that must be paid on it is social security or self employment tax, unless they have been exempt from social security. The church or ministry should cover the pastor's housing expenses above their salary. An accountant should be consulted to fully utilize this benefit.
4. **Insurance.** Insurance should be provided for pastors like any other professional. Many pastors and their families have suffered immense hardship and financial strain because they didn't have health care. The church should do its best to provide comprehensive health care for their pastor. Also, the pastor's family must be taken care of if unexpected tragedy strikes. God will bless people who take care of the person God has given them. The church should provide a term life insurance policy on both the pastor and his wife. Make sure the value is sufficient to take care of the family in case of an untimely death.
5. **Retirement.** A retirement plan like a 401K, IRA or insurance policy should be taken out in the pastor's name. Some churches put retirement plans in the church's name and the pastor is eventually left with nothing. This should never happen.

Honor and Respect

Romans 13:7 says, "Render, therefore to all their due, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, and honor to whom honor." Hebrews 5:4 says, "No man takes this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God."

There's honor in being called by God and we are to give honor to whom honor is due. They are not better than anyone else, but respect is to be given for the office and calling. By showing respect for the pastor and church, we also show respect for God. God says they should be honored not because they're better than anyone, but because of their calling.

Hebrews 5:1 says ministers are "taken from among men" who have the potential for failure just like the rest of us. When a judge enters a courtroom all rise to their feet. Why? Because it's expected and demanded. The church is a higher court. Let's restore honor and respect to the ministry. Below are a few areas we can all improve upon.

1. **Being on a first name basis.** Today, everyone is on a first name basis with the pastor. This is a definite show of disrespect for the ministry. Part of the problem is with pastors. We don't expect it. I used to feel the same. I wanted to be everyone's friend. I found out the hard way this caused many difficulties. When people really need help they

need their pastor, not a friend. It also makes it difficult when you must assert pastoral authority. People can usually deal with things coming from their pastor, but it's much harder coming from a friend. I don't have any problem using "Pastor..." with their first name. That's a step in the right direction.

2. **Sanctity of church services.** Reverence and respect for God, the pastor, and the ministry should be upheld in all services. God and your pastor deserve this.
3. **Talking during services.** I can't count the times I've heard people carrying on conversations during worship services. They talk with their neighbor and wonder why they don't get anything out of the service. This is very disrespectful and distracts from what the Holy Spirit wants to do in people's lives.
4. **Allowing children to be disruptive.** Allowing children to be disruptive is disrespectful, distracting, and takes away from all the Lord wants to do. Today, most children are out of control and not disciplined at all. If kids or adults get up and down and roam around during the service people will be distracted and the purpose of God will be thwarted. Many parents think it's cute when their children are moving up and down the aisle. It isn't cute and the Lord is not pleased. They must be taught to respect the Lord, pastor and the church.
5. **Disrespecting the alter area.** The platform and altar is an area where sanctity must be preserved. It's a place where worship is led and the Word of God expounded. It should be off limits to anyone who is not there to minister. Children should never be allowed to play on the platform. It's not only disrespectful, but the equipment could be damaged or dangerous to the children.

God always blesses churches who take care of their pastor. He can't bless those who don't.

Guest and Itinerant Ministry Guide

Guest, evangelistic and itinerant ministries have a huge responsibility to the local pastor and their congregation. This guest ministry guide can also be applied to associate pastors and other staff members. There are things that should and should not be done when ministering in another person's church. Whether you have a music, teaching or preaching ministry, there are ethical guidelines that must be considered.

You have been invited to the church to bring blessing to that particular body of believers. To build it up, unify and equip the church under the leadership of the local pastor (Ephesians 4:11-13). If these things are not taking place, your purpose for being there is void. Facing your responsibility to the pastor and the church will help you build a good reputation, keep the door to ministry open in that local assembly, open up new opportunities in other churches, all while building the kingdom of God.

"I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

Always be Respectful

The pastor is the one who invited you in to minister and should be shown the utmost respect. Part of your job as a guest minister is to encourage and support the pastor. You should never do anything that might show disrespect toward him, his wife or family. The Bible says, "Render therefore to all their due – honor to whom honor" (Romans 13:7).

Always refer to him or her as Pastor (their name). Unless they tell you otherwise, never call the pastor by their first name, especially when ministering to their congregation. You may be tempted to think you are peers and should be on a first name basis. This may be true in your personal dealings with each other, however, when in front of their congregation or church leaders, you must show respect to the pastor.

When the pastor walks to the platform the guest minister should also. Stay there throughout the entire service. It is very disrespectful to leave before the service is over. Often the guest wants to arrive when it's their time to minister and leave when their time is over. This should never take place. You should never leave until the service has been dismissed. The guest should be supportive of all that is taking place. If he/she expects to be listened to, he must also listen to what others have to say. We reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7).

Not only should you remain in the service, but you should also participate. Your body language and actions tell everyone whether you are behind the ministry or not. If they are worshiping or praying, then so should you. When an offering is being taken, you should always be prepared to give in that offering. When the pastor is encouraging the people in a certain direction, you must lend him your complete support. In short, you should be his biggest “amen” corner.

Never make the pastor or church the punchline of a joke. Often the pastor is used in the context of a joke to his personal embarrassment. This should never be done. This type of jesting does not elevate the pastor and his ministry, but shows blatant disrespect. Nothing negative should ever be said about the pastor, his family, his appearance, or ministry. Always show the utmost respect and honor for the pastor and their ministry.

Maintain Doctrinal Unity

You must present a unified front doctrinally. A guest minister should never address areas of doctrine that he is in disagreement with the pastor. The Bible says, “Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned”(Romans 16:17). You are there to support the church. Stick with the areas you agree on and not areas of disagreement. The last part of that verse says, “And avoid them.” If you tread into areas that do anything but build and strengthen that local body, the pastor, and his position doctrinally, you will be avoided the next time they are considering having a guest in to minister.

Be Punctual

Find out what time the pastor needs you to arrive and be there on time. It is never OK to be fashionably late. There must be time for you to set up any personal equipment or displays. Let the pastor know how much time you need, and be there on time. If there is a prayer meeting before the service, make sure you are there in time for it.

I once had a fairly well known musician in our church and sent someone to the motel to get him. He had just ordered food, knowing what time I said he needed to arrive. Needless to say, the person had to wait on him. He finally showed up, a great deal past the time to pray, and still needed time for a sound check and to go over the service with me. He acted as if everything revolved around him, the “star.” I can’t tell you how much stress this put on me and my church. If you need to arrive at a certain time, be on time! No matter how good he was, and how well he was liked, I never asked him back after that.

Follow Time Constraints

Always ask how much time you have been allotted and stay within that structure. Whether it's twenty minutes or an hour, stop when your time is up. Our church once shared a service with another church. They were to take care of the worship, communion and offering and I was to preach the message. We were at their church and he suggested I should keep the sermon within thirty minutes because of other things that were taking place.

I preached and condensed much of what I had to remain within his time restraints. The Lord really moved and we had a great altar time. After the service, the pastor said to me, "You didn't take much time." I told him he asked me to stay within that time period and so I did. His reply to me was, "Yes but nobody ever does!" That should never take place. You must always stay within the time frame given to you.

Also, it is never proper to ask for more time in front of the congregation while ministering. To do so is to upstage the pastor and usurp his authority. Often the pastor is put on the spot by the guest asking him, in front of the entire body, if he could have just a little more time. It is often blamed on the Holy Spirit, saying He is moving and not to continue would be to quench what He (the Holy Spirit) wants to accomplish. The pastor is the one who is ultimately in charge of that body and the service, and should decide if the service should be extended. Always be considerate of the pastor and the time structure the church has established.

Be Supportive

When I am taking part in another person's ministry, it is my job, above all else, to support him. Jesus said, "If you have not been faithful in that which is another man's who shall give you that which is your own" (Luke 16:12). The job of the guest ministry is not only to bring blessing to the body, but to back the pastor and support them in every way.

When you are ministering in someone's church, make it your passion to uplift and support that local church pastor with all that you have. It is the right thing to do and is very pleasing to the Lord. You don't know what the pastor may be going through and the pressures he is under. He typically has no one to support him and undergird his ministry. God has most probably sent you, the guest minister, to be that person.

You can support the pastor personally by encouraging his people to be faithful to the church, the services, giving, and their involvement. Be observant. Anything you see or hear that the

church is doing, or the pastor is challenging them to do, get on the band wagon. Make a note of it and incorporate it into your ministry. I guarantee you will notice the difference in God's blessing and anointing during the services. Push his vision and challenge the people to get behind it in full support. Your ministry will be blessed and increased as a result of your efforts.

Mailing Lists and Contacts

A guest ministry should never try to build their ministry off another's work. It's just not ethical or proper. Jesus Himself didn't even do this. He sent a very important message through an angel to his servant John (Revelation 1:1) and had the apostle John convey it to the church through the local pastor. In Revelation 1:16 John describes his vision of Jesus saying, "And He had in His right hand seven stars," and in verse twenty declares the stars were the angels or messengers (pastors) of the seven churches.

Jesus didn't even go directly to the people of the churches in this case but sent His word to them through the pastor or messenger of that church. In each letter that follows He says, "unto the angel (messenger or pastor) of the church in.....write." I believe this makes a strong case for itinerant and evangelistic ministries not to build their mailing list off of fellow minister's churches and their congregations.

Let's face it, most mailing lists are put together primarily for the purpose of raising money. When a ministry is invited into a local church to bless that body and the guest draws monies from the people (that should be going to support the local ministry) something is wrong. I believe this is a very unethical practice. One of Jesus' main purposes was to build the church and this does just the contrary. It takes away from the church and drains it of much needed support. You'd be surprised how many people cut back on their tithe and offerings to fund these ministries.

Any mailings done by guest ministries to the churches they've ministered in should be done through the pastor and church. They could either send a copy of the newsletter to the church for the pastor to let them read, or send a bundle for the pastor to give out to his people at his discretion. At the very most, if anything is sent to an individual, it should never be done without the express permission of the pastor – and he should never be asked in front of the person, but in private.

Receiving Offerings

The church has usually arranged for the guest to receive an honorarium or love offering prior to the guest's arrival. When people have been blessed by an incoming ministry, they will often get him off to the side and give him extra cash or a check. Often this is done for the attention that is given them. There has usually been an offering taken for him already. They should have given it then, which makes you wonder why they are doing so later. It could be they were struggling with what they should give during the offering. In any case, to receive such a gift without the pastor's knowledge is unethical and improper.

There are many problems that could arise. For example, it can bring the credibility the guest's ministry into question. Often, after giving such a gift, the giver will expect a tax receipt at the end of the year. They will often come to the church and request it be added to their end of the year giving record. This puts the church in a very awkward situation. If they add it to your end of the year contributions receipt, with it not having gone through their books, they are being unethical. If they refuse, tension may arise between the giver and the church.

If you are the giver, the ethical thing is to go to your pastor, usher, or bookkeeper and ask if they could add it to the ministry's check. If you're the guest minister, you should take the gift to the pastor and give it to him. This clears up any potential misunderstandings and gives the pastor added respect for you. Most generally, he will either tell you to keep it or will add it to your check. Either way, you have done the ethical thing.

Counseling Church Members

A guest ministry should never counsel people in another person's congregation without the express permission or request of the pastor. At best, you have a very limited knowledge of that person, their situation, and what they may be going through. Often people come for counsel to get an "OK" for something they want to do. Without you knowing their background, or what is really going on, you may place your blessing on something you shouldn't. If you had full knowledge of their situation, you might counsel them totally different.

Also, being in another person's church, you must present a unified front. People can often be divisive without even knowing it. If the pastor has counseled them one way and you come along and give them totally different advice, you are being divisive. It has the potential of bringing difficulty to the pastor, ministry and the local body. It also can bring confusion into the life of the person you were attempting to help.

It is always best to refer them to the pastor and ask whether he would like for you to talk with them. If so, he can request it. This keeps lines of communication open, presents a unified front, and prevents the devil from getting a foothold in the church or causing a schism between you and the pastor. If he decides you should counsel them, he can at least let you know where he stands and some generalities of their situation, so you can minister effectively while maintaining unity in the body and with the pastor.

Personal Visits

It is never a good idea to spend personal time with the people in another person's congregation. Everything should be kept on a professional level. People will frequently want to go out to dinner with you or invite you to their home. This is usually not a good idea unless the pastor is going with you.

Often they want to get to know you on a personal level, but there are times when they want to get you off alone to voice their opinions on some issue or to drag you into the middle of an issue in the church. They might ask you something hypothetical like, "What do you think about a situation like this?" or "What would you do if you were in this position?" It may be a trap and will often come back to haunt you.

A good thing to do when given an invitation is to say, "I'll ask the pastor to come along with us." Another thing you can say is, "Let me check with your pastor. He may have already made plans." Never go out with someone or to their home unless the pastor is either with you, has suggested it, or you have his permission and blessing.

This obviously doesn't apply when you're filling in for a pastor and he designates a couple to take you out for a meal, or if he arranges for you to stay in someone's home. He knows those he can trust and you are doing so at his suggestion.

Always run everything you do by the pastor first. This shows proper respect and prevents the enemy from having an opportunity to accuse you. It's always right to go through the messenger. This is what Jesus did (Revelation 1).

Responsibility to Visiting Ministries

This is directed toward the church's responsibility to those ministries that come into its midst to minister, such as, teachers, evangelists, musicians, and the like. These hopefully are not coming in just to earn a living but to bless the church, kingdom of God, and minister into people's lives. Motive is always of the utmost importance. Just as was shared at the beginning, they must first and foremost be sure that they are called to their ministry by God and not merely following a vocation. This will make all the difference in the world in their endurance, steadfastness, and attitude.

Much of this section will also apply to missionaries and other such organizations which come into the local church to raise support. Though most of what's said here will apply to them, there may be some differences since their main thrust is looking for an open door to share their ministry and hoping to raise ongoing (monthly) support. Their purpose is awareness as to what they are about and involved in, along with developing a financial base in order that they may continue to do what they feel God has called them to.

In these days, many ministries coming into the church have contracts that must be signed and agreed upon before they will come to minister. If this is for clarification, so there are no misunderstandings, it's great. However, if it is set forth concerning those things they insist upon before they will come and minister, I have a problem with that. Where's the faith and trusting God? We need to get back to those basics of trusting God and going wherever He tells us, even if they aren't able to meet our demands. The problem is we've become too commercialized, especially in America. We see this proliferated especially in the Christian music industry. It has also drifted over into every other aspect of ministry. An acceptable approach would be for them to say, "This is what we really need, if you are unable to meet our need, we will come and trust God to make up what is lacked." In this way, faith is being expressed while the need is being made known. This, I believe, is a good balanced way of approaching it.

I do believe there is good reason why many have gone to such extremes. Far too often churches have been negligent in their responsibilities to those willing to come in and minister. When they have been willing to trust God and come for whatever the church was able to do, the church has failed to treat them as they should. After frequently being taken advantage of they've had to do something to protect themselves; thus, the contracts, requirements, and demands. If both sides would trust God and be faithful to their responsibilities before God much of this could be avoided. There probably should be something in writing to assure there are no misunderstandings.

The following are some suggestions or guidelines I believe will help us in properly taking care of those God sends our way to bless, strengthen, and encourage us.

Lodging, Meals and Transportation

Years ago it was expected guest ministries would be staying in someone's home in the church. This should be a rarity in our day. Times are different. Those on the road are typically much busier and on the road for longer periods of time. They need time alone where they can get refreshed in order to be adequately ready to minister. Pastors and their congregations are also much busier today. With their hectic lifestyles, it's asking a lot to have people staying in their home.

It should be expected that the host church provide a nice hotel room for their guest. You don't have to be elaborate, but it should be nice enough where they can be comfortable. If it could be one that has a restaurant where they can eat without going out, this would be great. If their family and children have come with them, it would be a good gesture to get a motel with a pool to allow for a little family time.

If possible, the church should provide some meals during their stay. The church should at least take the guest out after every service for a time of fellowship and a good meal. If they can provide breakfast and/or lunch also it would greatly help. Remember, they are coming for you and will have to eat one way or another.

At times a guest may fly in and have meetings for multiple nights. Often it is arranged for a number of churches to have a ministry in combined services or a number of services in each church. In such cases, it is good, if possible, to provide transportation for them during their stay. Often there may be a car dealer in the church who can lend the church a car for the guest. Make sure it is a decent and dependable automobile. If this isn't possible, renting a car is always an option. This gives them some flexibility as opposed to being stuck at the motel and dependent on the pastor and church to take them places.

Ministry Time Frame

Always make it extremely clear of any time restraints that may exist. If you don't want it going past a certain time; let them know it. We can't complain about someone going too long if we don't let them know what restrictions are there. Do make sure you give them ample time to develop their ministry. You invited them in to minister and you need to give them enough time to do a quality job. Be very careful not to fill the service up with non-essentials.

I was at a church to minister once when the pastor was gone and his mother was in charge. They had worship and she had people come up for a time of prayer. This went on and on for an extended period of time. By the time they gave the service over to me, there was absolutely no time for me to develop my message, nor have any ministry time afterward. I had to give a very brief and condensed presentation and give the service quickly back over to them. I had something, I believe that, could have really blessed the people and brought great support to the pastor and his ministry. As it was, I didn't have time to adequately do what God had called me to do. I truly believe they missed out on something that could have brought great blessing to the body. We will never know for sure.

Honorarium

If you have agreed with them on a certain amount then you should fulfill your commitment. As men of God, we must be men of our word (James 5:12). In fact, if the Lord has blessed the meetings and you are able to do more than agreed upon, as the Lord may lead, you should do so. If they have agreed to come on a love offering basis, you should make sure the offering is enough to meet their needs. Many think they have only agreed to an offering and so that is all they are responsible for. This is true in a legalistic sense but hopefully we are not legalistic but men and women of grace.

I believe that unless the offering is extremely good we should always plan on adding to it. We may not be obligated to do so but in doing so we will be demonstrating love and grace. The worker on the road is still worthy of his hire or support (Matthew 10:10). In fact, just like the pastor, he too is worthy of double honor if he has worked hard at being a blessing and ministering to God's people (1 Timothy 5:17-18). As in the case of the pastor, this means twice as much. To be practical, you should never give your guest ministry any less than what you make as your weekly salary. In fact, if at all possible, it should be more. Remember, as a traveling ministry, there are weeks when they have no engagements and therefore there is no pay check.

As a side note, it is very unlikely for churches to have any guest in to minister for weeks surrounding major holidays such as Easter and Christmas. As a result, it is unlikely guest ministries will have any income during those seasons. Most churches have particular ministries in regularly. For these, I believe, it is proper to send them an offering for such holidays as Christmas. As in the case of the pastor, it would also be nice to find out their birth date and send them a gift then as well.

When we give sacrificially to a men and women of God, God will out of His way to meet our needs. The Philippians gave a love offering to Paul while he was in prison. His response was as follows: "I have received everything in full, and have an abundance, having received from

Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:18-19). As we look at the context, we see this promise follows their sacrificial gift of love. When we do the same, we are able to claim the same promise and only then.

When the church is young and/or small and unable to pad the offering special measures should be taken to allow for this. My pastor always encouraged us to put back our personal tithe in order to supplement the offering. I have always tried to do this to the best of my ability. I would usually have my check recorded and then place it in an envelope until the next guest ministry came in. After receiving the offering, I would add what I had accumulated to the offering before writing the check out to them. This usually made for a fair and substantial honorarium. When we take good care of our guest like this word will spread. Soon more and more ministries will want to come minister for us.

Let me also add that effort must be put forth to challenge our people to give generously. Our people listen to us. If we will challenge them they will respond. This should not only be done at the time of the offering, but also on an ongoing basis. We must teach our people these principles over and over. The Bible makes it abundantly clear, “Let the one who is taught the Word share all good things with him who teaches.” (Galatians 6:6 NASB) When we do so, we can be assured that “God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

Also, make sure the guest ministry is given a check before he leaves. It is never right to say you will mail it to them. Often when this has happened, it is weeks before they get the check, if they get it at all. It may be because you thought someone else sent it when they did not or everyone got busy and forgot. Even if it is sent out the very next day, they should never be treated this way. It’s just not that difficult to get it to them before they leave.

Let’s treat our guests right and they will continue to come back. Along with them others will follow. God will make sure of it. As you are faithful, God will bring your way more and more anointed and talented ministries. After a while, you will begin to get a reputation for having in quality ministries, which in turn will help your church to grow.

Promotion

It is the responsibility of the church and the pastor to do the best possible job they can in promoting the ministries they invite in. When we do this, it will expand our ministry, encourage the guest, and bless the church. The more often people in your community (city) are made aware of special events going on at your church or ministry, the more attention it will draw to you. In two different churches I began we had those to visit who said they had noticed, over a period of time, things going on and figured something must be happening there so they thought they should visit and check us out. Often their visit was over a year after seeing the advertisement.

You should use all that you are capable of to get the word out concerning your event. Most all newspapers, Christian radio and TV stations will give free news releases or community service announcements. Paid advertisements are great if you can afford it. We are not being faithful stewards if we don't take advantage of the opportunities allotted us.

You should also use fliers and every other means possible to promote the ministry you're having in the church. Assign those in your church/ministry to commit to different areas that they will assure fliers will be placed. Each person will be in charge of making sure that fliers are placed in all of the establishments in their region. Be sure you or those you send out ask the owners or managers if they will please keep the fliers up until the date of the event. Express your sincere gratitude to them for their help.

A mailing and phone campaign is also good. I always kept the addresses, phone numbers and e-mails of everyone that I've come in contact with or who has visited the church. Approaching a special event I do a mailing to all on our mailing list approximately two weeks prior to our meeting. Days just prior to our meeting, I make sure everyone on our list is called, reminded, invited, and encouraged to be in attendance and bring someone with them. In the beginning days you often have to do this yourself but hopefully as you grow you can appoint others to do this for you.

The Internet must not be forgotten. Be sure your event is featured on your website, you can also advertise it free on sites like Craigslist and other such sites. Also don't forget social media sites. The church can promote their event on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Tumblr, Instagram, Reddit, Flickr, and other such sites. We are obligated to use everything at our disposal to promote our event. We should expect it of ourselves, our congregation, and God expect it of us as well.

Protect Them From Being Over Burdened

There will always be those who will seek to get the guest ministry off into a private conversation. After all, if you have done a proper job of promoting them, they will likely be viewed as somewhat of a star in the eyes of the people. There will inevitably be some instant groupies. They will attempt to corner them, just to talk, get some counsel, prayer, or ask them what they think about certain things. This is usually pretty innocent and is okay to a point.

The problem comes when there are those who dominate their time. It is even worse when multiple people do the same. Suddenly they are swamped. No matter how willing the guest is this can be very draining. Remember, they have just spent considerable time ministering and have already given out most of what they have emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. If you are not able to take them off right after the service, at least look out for them and be ready to rescue them if need be. It is also good to train and teach your people accordingly.

Privacy and Rest

Don't keep them going all the time. Often we feel as if we need to entertain our guests. When, in actuality, they would be glad to just rest and be alone. Ask them what they would prefer and encourage them to be honest. This will make it much easier on both of you. Especially if they are on the road going to place after place, they need time alone with God and to just be alone and rest. Allow them this simple luxury. Be sure others aren't allowed to interrupt them either. To be safe, it shouldn't even be made public knowledge where they are staying. Give them a place of sanctuary. As a minister yourself, you know how important this is. Their ministry to you and your people will be all the better for it. They will also be eternally grateful.

How to Grow a Small Church

Growing a small church (especially one started from scratch) can be a challenge, but there are proven ways to push your ministry to the next level. The following tips apply to small, struggling churches as well as average size churches that may have reached a plateau in their growth.

Be Passionate

To build a successful church, you must be passionate about your ministry. Men and women who accomplished great things in the Bible were passionate and committed. Elijah was passionate and unafraid when he confronted Ahab the king (1 Kings 17-19). As a result, he saw a nation touched by God's power.

Pray

No great work has ever been accomplished for God without spending much time in prayer. It was said of Jesus, "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). It was also said of the early church, "These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer along with the women" (Acts 1:14). However, prayer alone won't grow a small church. My spiritual overseer taught me that great preaching and great praying alone will not build great churches. Some of the best preachers and committed prayer warriors continue to pastor small churches. After God brings the people, it's up to us to keep them.

Structure for Growth

God will bring people, but if you don't structure for growth they won't stay. Each new level or plateau requires change. Often trouble comes forcing us to restructure our ministry (Acts 6:1-7). New structure and delegated responsibility allowed the New Testament church to grow while also removing pressure from the apostles. Pray about how you should organize your church including developing leadership for different areas of ministry like elders, deacons and ushers.

Keep Your Meeting Place in Good Condition

No matter what type of building you rent or own, keep it looking the best it can. Painting and cleaning do wonders for both inside and out. Always keep the grounds and parking area clean and well manicured. The first impression your meeting place gives can make a huge difference to visitors.

Update Church Information

Make sure all signs and displays are accurate. Sunday school and service times should be clearly listed, especially if you have multiple services. Also, make sure relevant information is kept up-to-date on marquis, advertisements, websites, brochures, letterhead, business cards, etc.

Be Accessible

Pastors and church leaders must be accessible to members and visitors. Make sure your contact information is displayed clearly so people can reach you. If possible, hold regular office hours so they won't have to call you at home (unless it's an emergency). If you live far from the church get a local number where you can be reached.

Think Big

Proverbs 23:7 says, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." If you are going to grow your church, you must think and act as if it is larger than it is.

Advertise

Most areas have news outlets that offer free public service announcements and news releases. Advertise every event you have, even a pitch-in dinner! Create an announcement with information about the event and take it to your local newspaper, Christian radio or TV station. If promoting a concert or guest speaker, submit a picture with the news release. Media outlets will often include a small photo if they have room.

Be Consistent

If you have certain time schedules for your services, make sure you keep them. I never canceled a service for fear that someone who had been thinking about visiting our church might come and find it closed.

Be Punctual

If you tell someone you are going to meet them at a certain time, be there. If you have meetings scheduled to start at a certain time, start then. People get in the habit of arriving late to church. If they arrive late and find the service has already started, it will teach them to be on time. On the other hand, if visitors arrive at an advertised time and find the service delayed they will not be punctual the next time, if they return at all.

Pursue Excellence

Paul wrote, “That you may approve things that are excellent” (Philippians 1:10). We must be the best we can in all we do. We must be professional in appearance, preaching, teaching, and conducting the service. Think about what you see when attending a small church compared to a large one. You wouldn’t expect to visit a large church and see the order of service, worship, timeliness, etc. conducted in a haphazard manner. If a small church wants to grow it should do no less.

Visitors

Visitors are very important to the growth of your church. For every visitor make sure you:

- 1. Welcome them.** It's important for all visitors to feel welcomed, cared for and accepted (Romans 15:7), but not embarrassed. Visitors should never be put on the spot or feel like they are on display.
- 2. Get contact information.** Fill out a card or sheet with each visitor's name, mailing address, phone number, and email address.
- 3. Follow up.** Send a letter or email thanking them for attending your church. By the end of the week, call or visit them if possible.

Members

If someone misses two or three weeks in a row, call or visit them – they may be going through a rough time. Jesus stressed the importance of this in Luke 15. I would rather have people complain because we loved them too much than because no one ever called them. If someone leaves to attend another church, let them go. If they have strayed from the body, we must go after them. A phone call doesn't take that much time. Ask how they are doing, pray with them and show you care. You'll be amazed by the results. As the church grows, this duty can be delegated to someone in leadership.

Special Events

Have as many special events as you can. Try to plan an event at least every four to six weeks. Larger churches typically have a lot of special events. People tell me they visited our church because they noticed we had things going on. When we had special events, I called everyone on our mailing list, including visitors, and encouraged them to come. We usually had a good turnout which encouraged everyone. Have regular planning sessions with your leaders. People are attracted to different things. A pastor who built a large church from scratch told me, "We do some carnal things to get people in the church because people are carnal. Once we get them in, we can work the carnality out of them."

How to Motivate Your Congregation

Motivating church members to get involved in ministry is often frustrating for pastors and church leaders. God wants all believers to be involved in their local congregation. How can pastors and church leaders motivate members to be more fruitful and productive? Below are a few things that can help.

Tips to Motivate a Congregation

1. **Preach the Word.** 2 Timothy 4:2 says, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching.” Tell church members what God expects and motivate them through the Word. God wants His people to be involved and use the gifts He has given them. 1 Peter 4:10 says, “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” God promises His Word will not return to Him void (Isaiah 55:10-11).
2. **Be positive.** When motivating church members always be as positive as you can. Negativism beats people down. In John 15:16 Jesus said feed my sheep not beat my sheep. This will build them up spiritually, mentally and emotionally for the task God has called them to.
3. **Encourage people.** Always be encouraging in your preaching and personal contact. Let them know you believe in them and know they can “do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). Encourage them to try different ministries until they find God’s calling. Let them know that finding their function in ministry will bring great fulfillment in their lives.
4. **Start with small tasks.** Don’t overwhelm people. Start with small tasks that won’t take long to complete. Long term commitments can be overwhelming. Below are a few examples of entry-level tasks:
 - **Teaching a class.** Ask if they can help out in a particular class for two or three weeks. Ask them to teach a specific part of the class then observe the primary teacher the remainder of the time. If they fit and feel comfortable, expand the task by asking them to fill in another week or two. If they appear to be a gifted teacher, continue to move them forward.

- **Evangelism.** If you ask people to participate in door-to-door evangelism every week, most will not be interested. If you spend a few weeks promoting evangelism, then challenge them to go out for a few hours, most people will give it a try. If the first outing is successful, repeat the event every six months or so.
 - **Incentives.** Remind church members that God rewards their service (1 Corinthians 3:9-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10-11). We are saved by grace, but reward is earned. Use your imagination. There are many things you can do to offer incentives that will encourage involvement.
5. **Awards and recognition.** Have an award ceremony once or twice a year for workers and ministry leaders. This is a wonderful source of encouragement for their service to the Lord and church. Bringing attention to those who are presently being used of God is also motivation for other people to get involved.
 6. **Set attainable goals.** Most pastors have an overall vision for what they believe God wants for their ministry. Proverbs 29:18 says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” However, most people respond better to short-term, smaller goals. They want to see the fruit of their labor. After accomplishing their goals people will be encouraged and excited about the church. Before long you’ll be hearing them say, “What’s the next challenge God has for us?”

Prayer: Father God, I know you want your people to be involved and productive in ministry. Give me the wisdom and imagination to motivate them to be used of you. In Jesus name, Amen!

Evangelism Through Cell Groups

Small group evangelism is a great way for pastors and church leaders to integrate community outreach into their congregation. Although done in a cell group setting, most methods are similar to those used by small churches.

Tips for Small Group Evangelism

1. **Train people to evangelize.** Church leaders must train their members in personal evangelism. This should be the normal process of discipleship. We lead someone to Christ, train them to do the same, and they train the next person, and so on. This is one of the things Paul was stressing to Timothy when he said, “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2).
2. **Use your testimony.** One of the best ways for people to witness to others is to use their testimony. If a person is born again through their faith in Jesus Christ, they have a testimony. This will give them victory over the enemy (Revelation 12:11) and be a great starting point to share their faith. We can say with the blind man Jesus healed, “One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25).
3. **Reach out to personal acquaintances.** After people have been trained, they should reach out to people they know. Effective evangelism takes place most often with those we are closest to. Have members invite people to their cell group meetings. Reach out to family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, etc.
4. **Plan special events and meetings.** When your church is hosting a special service, meeting or music event, it’s much easier for members to get their friends and family to visit. Small groups are no different. There are multiple events you can host, such as cookouts, special speakers, music, pool parties, outings, etc. Use your imagination.
5. **Visit people in the community.** Door-to-door evangelism isn’t used as much as it once was, but it is still an effective way to share the gospel. One of our contributors, Jack Wellman, suggests a survey and gives sources for free gospel tracts and training materials. His article, “How to Start a Spiritual Conversation” is worth the read.

6. **Give gifts to the needy.** Helping someone in need in your area is a great way to be a witness. James 2:15-17 says, “If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, depart in peace, be warmed and filled, but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” 1 John 3:17-18 says, “But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

Below are a few examples:

- **Food.** Have a food drive or take up an offering to purchase food. Make a list of those who are in need in your area and leave a bag or two of groceries on their front porch or steps. Also leave a tract or church flyer with your group’s contact information.
 - **Holiday gifts.** For holidays such as Christmas, take up a collection of toys, clothing, money and/or other gifts for a few families in your area. Like food, the gifts should be given discretely so the family is not embarrassed. What a wonderful way to express the love of Jesus to those less fortunate. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).
7. **Be a witness.** Pastors and church leaders must teach their people not only to witness, but to also be witnesses. Just prior to Jesus’ ascension He told His disciples, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses” (Acts 1:8). He didn’t say they would merely receive the power to witness, but to be witnesses. Jesus said we are the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-14). We are to let the light of the gospel shine from within. We are also to be the salt of the earth. Salt adds taste to life and make us thirsty. We should live our lives so those around us become thirsty for what we have.
8. **Be confident.** You may say, “I’m not sure I can be a good witness.” None of us have it in ourselves alone. Peter said, “His divine power (the Holy Spirit) has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence” (2 Peter 1:3-4). Through His divine nature we can be all He calls us to be. Jesus said, “Apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5), but Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

Let's set our hearts on evangelizing. Whether through cell groups, as a family serving Christ together, or through our local church. We can make an impact by sharing the gospel with others. Let it be said of us, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too" (Acts 17:6).

Are you a Pastor or a Preacher?

Many churches have great preachers but pastoring is more than just preaching. There are similar characteristics between the two, but a pastor's heart is very different. 2 Timothy 2:15 says all pastors should "study to show themselves approved" while trying to be the best preacher they can be. However, the weekly service is only a small part of our ministry as pastors.

Within the ministry gifts or offices is the five-fold ministry. Ephesians 4:11 says, "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers."

The Five-fold Ministry

1. **Apostle.** 1 Corinthians 3:10 tells us that apostles are foundation layers and pioneers. They typically flow in and out of all five offices or gifts.
2. **Prophet.** Prophets are typically called by God to speak to the church as a whole. This office is different from the manifestations spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. Individuals may be used by God to give a prophetic utterance who do not hold the office of a prophet.
3. **Evangelist.** Evangelists are soul winners, but many in the body of Christ have a burden to win souls who do not hold this office. Evangelists are called to motivate and move church members into action.
4. **Pastor.** Pastors are married to the church. They are committed to and their heart has been given to it.
5. **Teacher.** The teacher's desire is to make sure the church thoroughly understands the truth of scripture.

The Role of a Preacher

To preach means, “to proclaim after the manner of a herald.” This implies exhortation with the suggestion of “formality, gravity and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed” (Strong). Preachers have a passion for the Word of God. All of the first four ministry gifts often function as a preacher, particularly prophets and evangelists.

Characteristics of a Pastor

The pastor functions as a preacher when he feels a sense of urgency for his church, and when exhorting them to apply the truth he has taught. Below are eight characteristics of a pastor that may not be prevalent in the other ministry or office gifts.

1. **Pastors must be able to teach.** The pastor’s heart is to teach and instruct his people. In Ephesians 4:11 where it mentions “pastors and teachers” refers to a single gift. There are teachers in the church who are not pastors, but a pastor is always a teacher.
2. **Pastors must feed the flock.** 1 Peter 5:2 says, “Feed the flock of God which is among you.” A teacher may have a specific thrust in their teaching, but a pastor is called to feed the church a balanced diet of the Word. In Acts 20:27 Paul as an apostle, functioning often as a pastor said, “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” Good pastors are expositors of the Word and will frequently teach through entire books of the Bible.
3. **Pastors must shepherd the flock.** The word “feed” in Acts 20:27 can be translated as “shepherd” and 1 Peter 5:2 also mentions “exercising oversight.” Pastors are the primary overseer of the church and elders are under shepherds, but Jesus is the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4, 1 Peter 2:25). Pastors are called to exercise oversight over the body and all the ministries of the church, much of which may be delegated.
4. **Pastors must protect the flock.** James 3:5-6 says division starts with the “tongue” or gossip. Pastors must equip their people with the Word of God so they are prepared when false doctrine creeps into the church. For example, people in and outside the church may try to steal disciples away from the pastor by casting doubt about leadership. Fortunately, division can be dealt with on the congregational level before it gets to the pastor. When divisiveness begins in your church, abruptly stop it. Rebuke is needed to arrest it. If action is taken right away a church split may be avoided.

- Acts 20:28-30 – “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock, and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.”
 - 2 Timothy 4:2-3 – “Preach the Word. Be instant in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke and exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.”
 - Romans 16:17 – “Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them.”
5. **Pastors must go after stray sheep.** Jesus illustrated this point in Luke 15 with three examples: the lost sheep, coin and son. If a church member has not attended services for 2-3 weeks something is probably wrong. This also applies to following up on visitors. Get contact information for anyone who visits your church and make sure someone reaches out to them. A letter or e-mail should be sent after they visit the church. Before the following Sunday, they should also be contacted by phone and/or receive a personal visit.
 6. **Pastors must spend time in prayer.** 1 Samuel 12:23 says, “Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you, but I will teach you the good and the right way.” Pastors have a constant burden to pray for their people, even when they are in rebellion.
 7. **Pastors must have vision.** Proverbs 29:18 says, “Where there is no (progressive) vision, the people perish.” The vision the pastor receives from God is continually unfolding. Pastors should be asking God what He wants for the church, and planning accordingly.
 8. **Pastors must provide order and structure.** Titus 1:5 says, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city.” Good pastors should be constantly planning and seeking the Lord regarding how to organize and structure the church. Structure is imperative for its success and growth. As a church grows, it will need restructuring at every new stage. God can bring us new people, but if we do not structure for growth, we will not be able to maintain it.

Pastors may not have expertise in every area, but they will at least have a burden for each aspects of pastoring. God will bring someone who makes up where the pastor lacks. "You are complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10). It's important to lay ego aside and let other people help.

Prayer: I pray the Holy Spirit will complete you as you pursue your calling. May God grant you the grace to run with all diligence the race that is set before you. "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

Prosperous Pastoring

God desires that you be prosperous in your ministry and pastoring. This is His purpose for all those He has called and ordained to the ministry. Jesus said, “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (John 15:16). It is God’s will and design for you to be fruitful and productive in your ministry and pastoring.

Hopefully, as pastors and preachers of the Word, you will be men of the Word. This should be true in your sermon preparation, preaching and personal life. You are thus commissioned, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:8). This is God’s will and design for all of His people but especially for pastors.

“But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law does he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he does shall prosper” (Psalm 1:2-3). “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospers” (3 John 2). “But whoso looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in he does” (James 1:25).

Purposeful, Practical, Prosperous and Productive Pastoring

Set Office Hours

As overseer of a ministerial fellowship, my overseer and mentor, Dr. Paul E. Paino, used to say, “I trust our people aren’t lazy.” We must not be lazy as pastors and ministers (Romans 12:11 and Hebrews 6:11-12). Just because you may be able to set your own hours doesn’t mean you can just go into the office whenever you choose. You must set specific times as to when you are in your office. Someone might think, “what I am I going to do in the office all those hours?” You might think about praying, reading your Bible and maybe even opening a commentary now and then – STUDYING.

You must set regular office hours so your people can know where and when they can reach you. If you do this your people will know how to reach you and will be less likely to bother you at home. Our home should be a place of sanctuary and not a place where we are constantly

getting phone calls and having people stopping by continually. Our outside church ministry and activities likewise should have specific days and scheduling as to when we do them.

Have a Visitation Program

Have a regular time(s) whereby you visit people. This includes:

- **Hospital visitation.** When making hospital visits, don't stay too long, interrupt doctors meeting with the patient, or family members. Make your visits brief and to the point. Inquire how the patient is, share a Bible verse, pray and leave. Do Not try and make a diagnosis of their illness.
- **Jail visitation.** There are usually specific and best times to go to jails and visit. Talk to the sheriff or jail commander to inquire as to when's the best time(s) for you to go. There will always be special times when there are exceptions to this, as with everything you must have some flexibility.
- **Home visitation.** This should usually be prearranged, especially with new comers to the church. There are always rare exceptions to this, such as where you think there may be real problems, you are familiar with the person and you really need to go unannounced for observation as to the severity of their situation.

Home visits likewise should be somewhat brief and conducted professionally. Like hospital visits, stay focused, to the point, see how they're doing, share scripture, pray and leave. If there's a need for counseling, pray with them concerning the issue and set up a time when they can come by the church office and meet with you.

Develop Contacts Outside the Church

It is very wise to be familiar with those outside the church. Set up meetings or luncheons with leaders in the community such as the mayor, sheriff, Chamber of Commerce and other community leaders. Express to them that you know how important and difficult their job can be and ask them if there's is anything you can do to be of assistance to them and help make their job easier. Let them know you are committed to praying for them.

Have Guest Ministries in the Church Regularly

People need a break from just hearing and listening to you. It is also good for your people to receive something fresh. This can boost your ministry. Be sure those you bring in are supportive of you and your ministry and will do nothing to undermine you. This can also bring attention to your church and ministry. People in the community will take notice that something always seems to be happening there.

Use diversity in the guests you bring in. I have always used: teaching and preaching ministries, testimonials and music ministries – be diverse here too as to the kinds of genres you use. People have different tastes. Be sure they are all of the highest quality. This can promote growth in your church, as long as those you invite in are of the highest caliber.

Use the Media Before it Uses You

Media outlets are there for you to take advantage of. Most cities have newspapers, radio and television stations who will give you free public service announcements or news releases – use them. You can think of something almost every week to advertise. You should at least be able to place a news release for something once a month. There are also numerous places you and your people can place things online – utilize them!

Develop Leadership

Developing leadership is imperative. Paul said, “These things entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). Raise up those who are capable of taking over in your absence. Be sure they will be faithful/loyal to you and your ministry (Luke 16:12). Not every ministry is able to hire an associate pastor.

Structure and Restructure the Church Regularly

Great praying and great preaching alone won't build great churches. Proper structure is imperative. God can and may bring revival and an influx of new people into the church but if you don't structure your church accordingly, you won't be able to maintain the growth God brings your way.

Pray

Pray for God to give you vision and direction as to His plan for you and the church He has called you to (Proverbs 29:18 and Habakkuk 2:2-3). As with the previous point, also pray as to how He might call you to structure and restructure the church as you grow.

Plan

This goes along with prayer, structure, vision and leadership. Much of your time in the office and prayer should be devoted to planning. Good planning is paramount to any successful ministry. Have planning sessions with your leadership, in your leadership training and leadership meetings. Successful pastors are always about the business of planning.

Preach

This is the culmination and high light of what you have been leading up to all week. Don't simply throw something together last minute. Proper preparation is a must. Most people won't know of all the hard work you have done throughout the week. All most people typically see is what happens during the regular service times. There are specific points, tips or guidelines you can follow to put [powerful preaching](#) into your pastoring.

Tips to Effective Preaching

The Bible is full of examples of effective preaching. In Acts 2:14-38 and Acts 3:12-26 Peter ministered in such a passionate way that thousands were saved. If we are to plant, grow and develop our church properly, we must be effective preachers. Below are a few simple tips to help you become a more effective preacher and teacher of the Word.

Effective Preaching Tips:

Study the Word

In Acts 2:14-38 and Acts 3:12-26 its evident that Peter had studied the Word. He was given the opportunity to preach and was “instant in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2). 2 Timothy 2:15 says, “Studying to show yourself approved, a workman that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

When I first started preaching, I taught a different book of the Bible every service. I used at least seven commentaries. After researching them thoroughly, I asked the Lord what He wanted me to say, how He wanted me to present my message, and what kind of applications He wanted for His people. It took a lot of time and effort, but it was worth it. Taking shortcuts to study of the Word will rob you of the rich jewels the Lord wants to give you from His Word.

Memorize Scripture

Nothing is more powerful than the Word of God. Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, quoted large and obscure passages of scripture. He didn't pull out a scroll and look things up, he knew them. The Word will do more in the hearts of people than we ever can. My opinion is not worth much, but what God has to say is of eternal value. Nothing has helped me in my preaching and teaching more than the memorization of scripture. In Mark 2:2, Jesus was in a crowded house in Capernaum and there He “preached the Word unto them.” Only the Word makes our ministry effective.

1. God's Word will not return to Him void (Isaiah 55:10-11).
2. The Word is sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12).
3. "Bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever he has said unto us" (John 14:26).

Depend upon the Lord

John 15:5 says, "Apart from me you can do nothing." The only way to be effective preachers is to depend on Him. Peter learned this the hard way. In Matthew 26:33 he was depending on himself and not Jesus. When he preached on the day of Pentecost, he was no longer leaning on his own strength but God's. It's hard not to depend on natural strengths and depend on Him instead. Any thing of worth coming from my life is totally and completely Him. I cry out to Him every time I preach, letting Him know that unless He does it through me, it will be a disaster. Let's abandon self dependency and allow the Holy Spirit to do His work through us, which is the only way it will have lasting value or effectiveness.

We must Have an Experience with the Cross

When the lame man was healed and everyone began to look to Peter and John as if they were someone great, Peter was quick to turn their attention away from them and direct it to Jesus. In Acts 3:12 he said, "Why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?" Peter let them know it wasn't them but Jesus. In Acts 3:16 he took it a step further saying it wasn't his faith, but the faith that came from Jesus. If we haven't had a true experience with the cross our effectiveness in ministering the Word will be limited at best. There will be times when people look to us and we must always point them to Jesus. God will share His glory with no one.

We Need Support

No matter how great we think we are we can't do it alone. Peter, in Acts 2:14, "took his stand with the eleven." who stood behind him in full support. To be effective preachers, we must have people who support us. Peter had denied the Lord and in the natural, they probably wouldn't have chosen him. They knew he was the one Jesus had called. Let that be a lesson

to us. Let's stand behind the man God has called. He may not be perfect, and he may go through struggles now and then, but he's still the one God has called. Luke 16:12 says, "If you have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own." Everyone needs a good "Amen Corner!" As pastors, let's realize we can't do what God has called us to unless there are faithful people supporting us.

Use Voice Inflection

In Acts 2:14 Peter "raised his voice." It doesn't mean he was screaming and yelling. No one likes it when people are screaming at them. That said, it's boring when a person ministers in a monotone voice. When we want to emphasize a point there should be a change in our voice. God will help you as you go on in your ministry. Often it will develop as you are impressed with the importance of what you are attempting to get across. The best thing I can say to you is, be yourself. Don't try to be someone your not.

Be Informative

Peter said, "Let this be know to you" (Acts 2:14). We must give our people fresh insight and understanding which requires diligent study. It doesn't come easy. It's also imparting the mind of God to our people which requires us to spend time with Jesus (Acts 4:13), seated at His feet, listening to His Word (Luke 10:38-42). We need to be able to give them "thus says the Lord!"

Be Exhortative

Acts 2:14 says, "Give heed to my words." It does little good to give people information if we're not going to encourage them to implement it into their lives. People will not profit from our ministry unless we get them to put the Word into practice. It won't be easy, and often they won't like it, but we must challenge them to "give heed to our words." In Mark 15:21, Simeon of Cyrene who was pressed into service to bear Jesus' cross. It's probably the same Simeon in Acts 13:1 who became one of the leaders in the Antioch church.

1. Hebrews 2:1 says, "We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."
2. James 2:17 says, "Faith without works is dead."

3. Hebrews 4:2 says, “For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them, but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith, in them that heard it.”

4. Hebrews 10:24 says, “Provoke one another to love and good works.”

Get to the Point

In Acts 2:23, Peter said, “You nailed to the cross and put Him to death.” After the healing of the lame man, Peter said, “You disowned the Holy and Righteous one and put to death the Prince of life” (Acts 3:14-15). He said you, not someone in general. We must stop playing games with people and tell them the truth. If God called you to preach, don’t quit! “The gifts and callings of God are without repentance” (Romans 11:29). “God’s Word will not return to Him void” (Isaiah 55:11). He will prosper your work and ministry in due season.

Pastoral Prisons

In Ephesians 3, Paul was incarcerated for the sake of the gentiles at Ephesus. He had been arrested and thrown in prison for preaching the gospel to the Ephesians and other believers. Pastors battle many types of bondage for the sake of their people and congregation. These prisons range from very negative (those that hinder the pastor in his call), to those that are positive.

It's this type of commitment of pastors that enables a church to grow and flourish. It's their commitment to the uncompromising Word of God and their commitment to the people of God that enables a church to grow and develop into a force that the powers of darkness must reckon with.

Paul said, "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, who tries our hearts" (1 Thessalonians 2:4). "So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us" (1 Thessalonians 2:8).

Paul said to the Ephesian believers, "For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles" and again, "wherefore I desire that you faint not at my tribulation for you which is your glory" (Ephesians 3:1 and 13).

Notice that Paul says he is the "prisoner of Jesus Christ" for their sake. He belongs to Jesus. All born again believers are the possession of Jesus Christ, purchased by His blood (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), but even more so are those He has called into His full-time service, which is the five-fold ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16). We are Jesus' prisoner for their sake, and not the other way around. We are not to be held prisoner to people's will, but only to Jesus'.

Often well meaning people attempt to make us prisoners to their whims. We often go through things for their sake, but we are not to be their prisoners. We are not to be held captive by our people or the leaders of the church (board, elders, deacons, etc.). We must be directed by Jesus, and not by power-hungry people. Otherwise, we can't adequately be there for the congregation, and we become nothing more than a hireling.

We must be able to speak for God to the people corporately, as well as individually (2 Timothy 4:2-3 and Ephesians 4:15), while also receiving direction or vision from the Holy Spirit (Habakkuk 2:2-3 and Proverbs 29:18). Church leaders, back your pastors and let them do their job by allowing them to follow the vision God has given them.

Types of pastoral prisons and bondage:

Burdens, Pressure and Stress

Being in the ministry can be a burden at times, and can be very stressful.

- **Good pastors feel a burden for their people.** Paul said to the Romans, “I say the truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart” (Romans 9:1-2).
- **Pastors are burdened by criticism and complaints.** You don’t have to be in ministry very long before you experience this. The entire book of Numbers deals with the complaining of the children of Israel. There were times the complaining was so severe that Moses cried out to God, “I can’t bear the burden of this people” (Numbers 11:14 and Deuteronomy 1:9).

In Acts 6, there arose a complaint when the Hellenistic Jews were left out of the distribution of food. This can be a continual source of pressure in the life of a minister. God condemns such actions through out the book of Numbers, and in the New Testament as well (Philippians 2:14).

Although in most cases there seems to be no reason for complaints and criticism, God does use them at times. In the case of Acts 6, God used turmoil to cause the church to restructure things, to develop other leaders (the first deacons), and to enable the apostles to focus on the Word of God and prayer, as they should have been doing all along. This restructure process allowed the church to continue to grow and eased the apostle’s burden.

Spiritual Conflict

Every believer faces spiritual battles on a daily basis (Ephesians 6:12), but much more so men or women of God. If the devil can knockout God’s servant, the people (congregation) will experience defeat as well. The pastor is like a general giving direction to the army in the mist of the battle. If the general is taken out, the enemy has the upper hand. In 2 Kings 6, the Syrian army came after Elisha (the man of God) because he was giving revelation to Israel, God’s people. Likewise, the enemy goes after men and women of God (pastors and five-fold

ministry) for giving revelation to God's people.

The devil and all his host goes after God's servants, especially when they are giving His people fresh revelation from the Word of God. There are a few things we should do for our pastors regularly:

- **Pray for them.** Paul said we are to pray for those in positions of authority (1 Timothy 2:1-3). Your pastor needs your continual prayers. They are on the front lines of the battle for you. Pray and do spiritual warfare for them as often as you can.
- **Encourage them.** Let your pastor(s) know you are behind them, and in full support of their vision. Know as soon as you tell your pastor you are behind him or her, the devil will hit you and try to get you to come against them.

The very ones that cried out in praise to Jesus during His triumphant entry, days later cried "crucify him!" In Acts 14, the ones who tried to offer sacrifices to Paul and Silas as gods, when they wouldn't allow them to, stoned Paul. Resist this type of attack with all that you have and stand behind your pastor in full support.

- **Allow them to take vacations and get plenty of rest.** Make it possible for your pastor and their mate to get away regularly. Every pastor needs a few good vacations each year, and at least a three day mini-trip every three to six months or so. There's something about leaving the geographical area we minister in; it seems a heavy load lifts once we pass out of a certain geographical area. Take up an offering for your pastors before they go, and if possible, even pay for their hotel and travel expenses.

Distractions

The enemy will continually attempt to distract the man or woman of God from what they have been called to do. Here are a few things that can distract pastors:

- **Busyness.** The enemy will attempt to keep us busy with all kinds of things. Frequently, they seem to be important things, but are really only trivial distractions that God hasn't called us to focus on. It was Martha who was distracted with all her preparation, while Mary sat at the Master's feet listening to His words. Jesus said Mary had chosen the "good part" which would not be taken from her (Luke 10:38-42). The apostles were busy feeding people instead of focusing on the Word and prayer (Acts 6:1-4). This is where the body, and more particularly the leaders of the church come in to play. Jump

in and help your pastor. Find out what needs to be done and do it. Ask what you can do to help relieve their burden. Pastors, don't be afraid to let your people help. Delegate!

- **Being bi-vocational.** I don't believe it is God's ultimate will for pastors to be forced to work two or more jobs. They should be free to dedicate themselves to the ministry so they can give it their best. I understand there are times when it is necessary to work another job, but if possible, it should not be for very long. People always point to Paul and say that he made tents for a living.

From my understanding of scripture, he only did so a couple of times and that for about a thirty day period and then promptly went back to full-time ministry. In most cases, the church or its leaders won't make the necessary financial commitment, or the pastor is afraid to take a step of faith to trust God and leave his secular job.

- **Dealing with conflicts.** Often pastors are distracted by having to continually put out fires in the church. These "fires" usually come by way of people's tongues. James said "the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity" (James 3:6). When people start to complain, criticize, and gossip, the fire begins to spread.

It's then up to the pastor to put the fire out. These conflicts can be directed towards one another, leadership, the Word being taught, the pastor or the church in general. Paul told the Romans, "Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).

Financial Need

Pastors often find themselves in bondage to financial need. This should never happen; the church should properly take care of its pastor. Paul told Timothy if the elder works hard at preaching and teaching, they should be worthy of double honor, and the context shows he was talking about finances (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

It was only after the Philippians had given to Paul's ministry in prison that he said God would meet all their needs (Philippians 4:17-19). To the Romans he said, if we become partakers of some ones spiritual things, then our duty is to minister to them with our carnal things, which is money (Romans 15:26-27). Also read 1 Corinthians 9:7-14.

The church should make sure the pastor is well taken care of. Pastors have expenses many do not have. Make sure they have a good salary. Figure the average salary of each family in

the church and pay your pastor at least that much. There should be other benefits as well, like showing your appreciation by taking up offerings for your pastors at special times (birthdays, Christmas, before vacations, etc.).

If you make sure your pastor is adequately blessed, God will satisfy you with the abundance of all His goodness. "I will fill (saturate) the soul of the priest with abundance, and my people will be satisfied with my goodness, says the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:14).

Battling the Flesh

Pastors or ministers are often viewed as being above fleshly desires, but the opposite is true. It was written to the Hebrews that "every high priest (is) taken from among men" (Hebrews 5:1). Their calling is not because they are so spiritual, but simply that God chose them. "The flesh lusts (wars) against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another" (Galatians 5:17). You say, "Not my Pastor, he's too spiritual!"

My overseer in ministry, the late Dr. Paul E. Paino, often said the more spiritual we become, the more our flesh fights us and the stronger it becomes. It bothers me when people get on their "spiritual high-horse" after a minister goes through difficulty or failure. If the truth were known, the pastor or church leader probably fell because they had reached heights in God that few could ever imagine. If you want to see how strong the flesh is, try praying for an hour (Luke 22:39-46)!

Condemnation

Most in the ministry struggle with self condemnation. Paul said frequently, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given" (Ephesians 3:8). He also said he was not worthy to be called an apostle (1 Corinthians 15:8-10). Ministers battle with things not going as well as they had hoped, or that they or their ministry isn't far enough along, etc. Once discouragement sets in, they often begin to beat themselves up (at least inwardly). Encouragement helps immensely. You never know when your pastor may be battling with discouragement and condemnation.

Revelation

In Ephesians 3:1-7, Paul speaks of the revelation that was given to him. Any minister worth his salt is chained to the desire for supernatural revelation. They want desperately to hear from God, receive supernatural insight into His Word, and receive vision from the heart of God for their church or ministry.

They spend hours, days, weeks, and even months wrestling with God in prayer. That's why Paul told Timothy to "study to show himself approved, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightfully dividing the Word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Also, pastors often spend countless hours studying commentaries, memorizing and meditating on the Word, and seeking the face of God.

Preaching

The minister is commissioned to preach the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8). Pastors can't help but preach, and if they are not preaching, they are miserable. Jeremiah said, "but if I say, I will not remember Him, or speak any more in His name, then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary of holding it in and I can not endure it" (Jeremiah 20:9). For those who are truly called to the ministry, even when you feel like quitting, the Word burns deep within you and you can't hold it back!

Paul said, "If I preach the gospel I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me, yes, woe is me if I preach not the gospel! For if I do it willingly, I have a reward, but if against my will, (a dispensation of the gospel has been committed to me – KJV) I have been entrusted with a stewardship" (1 Corinthians 9:16-17). Pastors are imprisoned to the preaching of the gospel, and we can't stop.

Frustration

Paul said he was obligated "to make all men see" (Ephesians 3:9 KJV). Any man or woman of God, with a passion for their call, experiences frequent times of frustration. Most of the frustration comes from trying to get people to see what we see; trying to get our people (congregation) to grasp what God has shown us through the Word, the vision He has given us (Proverbs 29:18; Habakkuk 2:2-3), and the need for faithfulness (Psalm 12:1; 31:23; Proverbs 20:6), etc.

Prayer

Paul said, “for this cause I bow my knees” (Ephesians 3:14). The person of God feels a driving force to pray. He must pray for his people, the work of God, and in seeking God’s mind and will. Samuel said, “Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you” (1 Samuel 12:23).

Both Paul and Moses had such a passion to reach their people that Paul asked to be accursed for his people, and Moses asked God to take his name out of His book of life if He would not forgive His people (Exodus 32:32 and Romans 9:1-3). Also read Jeremiah 30:21, Exodus 20:19-21 and 24:18.

The Church

Pastors are particularly held captive by the church. They are in many ways married to the church. They know it’s through the church that God’s manifold wisdom will be made known to this world and all the powers of darkness (Ephesians 3:10-11, 21), that the gates of hell will be knocked down (Matthew 16:13-19), and that the church alone was given the authority to bind and loose (Matthew 16:13-19 and 18:18-20).

It’s the church that Jesus will ultimately use to defeat the powers of darkness, give victory to God’s people, and to display God’s glory, majesty and wisdom. As a result, the pastor has given himself to the church. He is committed to building, defending, growing, and strengthening the church. He knows it’s through the covering of the local church that God’s people find security, protection, and the proper foundation for growth and victory. It’s the sheepfold through which the people of God are cared for and fed.

Impacting the World

The essence of "The Great Commission" is impacting the world through the preaching of the gospel and discipleship. Jesus commanded, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs" (Mark 16:15 and 20).

"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

If we are going to build and develop the church, "The Great Commission" is a must. The church simply cannot be built without the proclamation of Jesus' lordship and discipleship. Jesus said, "upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). This is the essence of how the early church turned the then world upside down.

First of all, let's understand that we will never be able to make a real impact on our society through legislation, programs and committees alone. Things done in the flesh in and of itself are doomed to failure – they must be done through Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is how the early disciples turned the world upside down. It was said of them, "These that have turned the world upside down are come here also" (Acts 17:6).

The problem is much of the church is too much like Lot. As Lot, our faith is personal and private – we are not really interested in impacting our society. We are only serious about our personal peace and affluence. Jesus said two things about who we are to be as His followers:

The Light of the World (Matthew 5:14)

Paul said we were to shine forth as light (luminaries) in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation (Philippians 2:15). In doing so Peter said we show forth to the world the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). Jesus said we are not to hide this light, as so many do, but let it shine for all to see.

As the moon has no light of its own and merely reflects the light of the sun, so we have no light of our own and merely reflect the light of the Son – Jesus. Your light may seem dim in the

midst of your other brothers and sisters in Christ, but when you get out into the darkness of the world even the dimmest light among us shines forth brightly.

While hanging in the darkness the dimmest light shines bright. We become like those we are around (1 Corinthians 15:33). In order to keep our light trim and bright we must spend time around God's people as well (Acts 2:41-42 and Hebrews 10:24-25). They are the ones in whom God dwells (1 Corinthians 3:16 and 1 John 4:12). They help us to keep our lights lit and bright. Godet said, "One torch serves to light another."

The Salt of the Earth (Matthew 5:13)

There are a number of things about salt that reveal to us the impact we can make on society if we will just be what God has called us to be. Here are a few interesting facts about salt:

- 1. Salt is a preservative.** It preserves what would otherwise decay. Before the days of refrigeration, people would pack meat in salt to preserve it. In the absence of salt, bacteria causes meat to go bad. Our job is to be on the meat and not just having a good time in the saltshaker (church). We have so much fun in the saltshaker that we allow the meat to go bad. Don't get me wrong, church is not supposed to be dead and boring. We are to have a lively and fun time in church, but that is to motivate us to do our job and go outside the doors of the church to get on the meat and be a preservative.
- 2. Salt stimulates growth.** In Jesus' day, farmers mixed salt with soil to enhance productivity. We are to be productive, to produce righteousness in our society, and an increase in the body of Christ by reproducing ourselves. Jesus said, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John. 15:16). If we are not producing then we are not being the salt God intends us to be.
- 3. Salt produces thirst.** Taverns provide an abundance of salty snacks. They don't provide them because they're nice guys, they simply know that those snacks make people thirsty and then their customers will purchase more to drink. If we are being the salt Jesus says we are to be, the world will become thirsty for what we have and see Jesus as the only one who can satisfy their thirsty souls (John.4:13).
- 4. Salt heals.** Salt gets rid of impurities. I remember as a young child when I had a sore throat my mother would have me gargle with salt water. The church is to be a spiritual hospital that provides healing for a wounded society (Galatians 6:1; Luke 4:18-19).

5. **Salt intensifies heat.** My wife informed me of how instructions with some pastas call for salt to be added. The addition of salt makes the temperature of the water boil hotter and more rapidly. We, as salt, are to boil hotter for God and turn up the heat in the world.

6. **Salt adds taste to life (Matthew 5:13).** When salt is added to food it gives the food a more colorful taste and makes it less bland. Jesus said salt can become tasteless and when it does it's good for nothing but to be trampled under the foot of man. When salt is mixed with another substance it changes.

The substance doesn't become salty but the potency of the salt is diminished to the point that it may not be seen or tasted. This is why we can't have, as our source of fellowship, the world. We must be in the world to affect it, but the world can't be our source of fellowship (1 Corinthians 15:33).

7. **Salt penetrates.** In Indiana our roads are often salted during the winter to melt ice and we see the result in some of our older vehicles as rust eats through the body of the cars. We are to penetrate the kingdom of darkness and the hearts of mankind.

If we're not impacting and penetrating the world, then something is wrong. We are not being what Jesus has called us to be. Let's be the light and salt we are supposed to be as Jesus' disciples. Let it be said of us, "These that have turned the world upside down have come here also" (Acts 17:6).

20 Steps to Planting and Growing a Church

There are proven, tested ways to grow any ministry, whether a new church or an existing congregation. Pastors often make big plans for their church while forgetting to take care of the little things. Below is a list of basic, common sense church growth tips from the late Dr. Paul E. Paino who spent his life building churches and helping others do the same.

Basic Church Growth Tips

1. Make changes slowly.
2. Set realistic goals.
3. Chart growth in measurable ways.
4. Announce office hours and keep them.
5. Promote a preaching series on pertinent subjects.
6. Never preach about problems.
7. Keep your meeting place in good condition.
8. Make sure classes and services start on time.
9. Budget funds to bring in guest ministries.
10. Never fire a volunteer, promote them.
11. Create job descriptions for all positions.

- 12.** Develop a training program for teachers.
- 13.** Develop self-supportive leadership.
- 14.** Appoint and train elders and deacons.
- 15.** Use local media to promote the church.
- 16.** Develop contacts outside the church.
- 17.** Make connections with community leaders.
- 18.** Develop a visitation program.
- 19.** Reach out to the children, elderly and poor in your community.
- 20.** If someone wants to leave the church, let them go.

If you apply these basic principles your church will grow. It may take time, but persistence and determination will result in a stronger ministry that reaches the community in a powerful way.

Biblical Versus Psychological Counseling

In planting, growing and developing a strong and healthy church, counseling will inevitably be a part of this process. My pastor and overseer in the ministry, the late Dr. Paul E. Paino, always discouraged involving your ministry in an excessive amount of counseling. Counseling can and often does eat up so much of a pastor's time that he barely has time to involve himself in the necessary aspects of ministry such as sermon preparation, planning, visitation, prayer and outreach.

Because of this, counseling, though necessary, should be kept to a minimum. If the truth be known, what most people get from counseling, they would get in the church services, if they will just make the commitment to be in attendance. However, because we must spend some time in counseling, we will dedicate these next four chapters to: Biblical Versus Psychological Counseling, Characteristics of Biblical Counselors, Twelve Steps Versus the Church and A Biblical Analysis of the Twelve Steps.

Counseling is when a person with problems of living goes to someone to talk through their problems and hopefully find solutions. There is a vast difference between true biblical counseling and secular or psychological counseling. There are, in general, four types of counseling offered to help people deal with human problems and dysfunctional lives. They are:

1. Secular Psychotherapy
2. Integrated Christian Counseling
3. Twelve Step Recovery Program
4. Biblical Counseling

Secular psychotherapy can be found in nearly every city and is easily attainable. Secular counselors go to secular colleges, graduate programs and their training is in the field of psychology and the humanistic approaches dealing with problems of living. Their philosophy is based on man solving his own problems, using his own resources, and not relying on any outside source to guide us. They do not address the spiritual dimension of humans, and they certainly do not bring God into the equation as having any influence on human issues or solutions. The exception being the Twelve Step Recovery Program, which uses a sort of generic god which people are encouraged to turn to for help and strength.

Rarely will any of them ever address moral issues or values and many times will go completely against what the Bible teaches. Secular counseling depends upon human reason and research to answer life's questions about people, problems, and solutions. Secular counseling assumes that there are no absolutes or meaning to life. It does not address the spirit or the soul any at all. (Which is somewhat ironic since psychology is the study of the soul.) They rarely deal with consequences of life decisions. The Bible, on the other hand, says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

Many after counseling with a secular counselor come away with the feeling that they have learned nothing at all about their situation. Secular counselors rarely give advice that requires action on the part of the client. Usually they just "listen" and use a sort of "Feed back" with the client of what the client said to them. Many go away frustrated because they did not go to counseling to have someone just "listen." They went because they needed real answers to their problems. This is true even among many so called Christian counselors who integrate secular psychotherapy with scripture, at least to a point. They are inevitably better than the one who is entirely secular by nature but it falls far short of true biblical counseling.

The Bible says, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8). We are not to mingle ourselves with the world's philosophies or the traditions of men. We are not to be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people. Therefore Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." (2 Corinthians 6:14-17).

Christians should definitely not seek counsel from non believers in any fashion, not even the so called Christian counselors or those involved with the twelve step system who direct you toward any generic god one might prefer, which in biblical times would have be considered idolatry. The Bible is clear concerning this when it says, "Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalms 1:1-2).

There is power in the Word of God. This must never be diminished. "For the Word of God is alive, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is

profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

It's the truth of the God's Word, Jesus Himself and the power of the Holy Ghost which has the power and ability to transform people's lives and set them free from all that holds them in its grip. “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, If you continue in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free....Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:31-32, 34-36).

Proper biblical counseling was always used by the church until somewhere around the twentieth century. At least that seems to be when psychological counseling began to proliferate. It was then people began to seek counsel from the world and it began to creep into the church. Sadly, the church, at this point began to mix biblical teaching with that of psychology. They succumbed to the world instead of the other way around. The Bible is clear we should never mix the doctrines of scripture with the teachings of the world (Colossians 2:8 and 2 Corinthians 6:14-17).

Biblical counseling began to surge in the early seventies through Dr. Jay E. Adams. He used a verse by the Apostle Paul to begin what he called Nouthetic Counseling. Paul said, “I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another” (Romans 15:14). The word admonish in Romans 15:14 is the Greek, noutheteo. This is what Dr. Adams referred to as Nouthetic Counseling. Nouthetic Counseling is a form of pastoral counseling that holds that counseling should be based solely upon the Bible and focused upon Christ. It repudiates mainstream psychology and psychiatry as humanistic, radically secular and fundamentally opposed to Christianity.

This was originally articulated by Adams, in *Competent to Counsel* (1970) and further books, and has led to the formation of a number of organizations and seminary courses promoting it. This is diametrically opposed to those seeking to synthesize Christianity with secular psychological thought. In 1993, the movement renamed itself biblical counseling to emphasize its central emphasis on the Bible. The Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and Counseling states, “The aim of Nouthetic Counseling is to effect change in the counselee by encouraging greater conformity to the principles of Scripture.”

True biblical counseling is listening to a person's problems or struggles and applying God's Word to them. Moses said concerning the children of Israel, “When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws” (Exodus 18:16). This is true biblical counseling.

When I was first saved, God laid on my heart to know His Word, so that, if anyone ever had a problem, I could give them what God said about their situation and not just what I thought. What I think does a person little good but what God says is of infinite value. It's the Word that has the power to change people's lives.

The biblical counselor points people to the Word of God, specific scriptures which pertain to their situation or problem, and in essence says, there's your answer. People either want to wallow in their situation, problem and sin or apply God's Word and find freedom, victory and liberty. It is usually much easier than people would like to make it.

Characteristics of Biblical Counselors

There's a major difference between the biblical counselor and psychological or secular counselors. The goals of both should be to help the counselee with the problems of life. The methods by which they seek to reach this goal, however, is drastically different. Let's look at some characteristics of biblical counseling.

Biblical Counselors Make Known God's Word

Moses said, "When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws" (Exodus 18:16). This is why the first requisite of a biblical counselor is that he must know God's Word. A Biblical counselor points the counselee to the Word of God. What does God say about your situation, struggle or problem? We are to make known what God says concerning their situation. It worked in Moses' day and it will work for us just as well as it did for him. The Word of God is eternal and scans generational barriers.

Biblical Counselors are Compassionate

The psychological counselor is doing his job whereas biblical counselors overall really care and are compassionate toward those they are seeking to help. They are there to give comfort and hope. Paul said, "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

He also said concerning those who would counsel with the Word, "I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another" (Romans 15:14). He is persuaded the biblical counselor/believer is full of the knowledge of scripture and also full of goodness toward those they are seeking to help.

Biblical Counselors Utilize a Greater Power

The psychological counselor is depending entirely on himself, his education, training and experience in the psychological way. The biblical counselor does not seek to help people in his own strength. He knows he can do nothing of lasting value on his own. He knows that apart from divine aid, he can do nothing of any lasting value to help (John 15:5).

He is, however, confident that through the power of Christ there is nothing he cannot do to see people through to victory (Philippians 4:13). He is confident that the anointing of God's Spirit will break every yoke of bondage from the life of the counselee. "It shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off your shoulder, and his yoke from off your neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing" (Isaiah 10:27).

Biblical Counselors Utilize the Power of Prayer

Jesus, the great counselor (Isaiah 9:6), set the example for us of the power of prayer to set people free. He had just spent an enormous amount of time seeing people set free by the power of God, "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). After praying, He went forth to see even more people set free and delivered.

Because of prayer and the anointing of the Holy Ghost on His life Jesus could say, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised – oppressed" (Luke 4:18). The Biblical counselor depends on the same power of prayer and anointing of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 10:27) to see his people helped, delivered and set free.

Biblical Counselors Seek to Relate to the Counselee

He does not seek to tower over them with a sort of superiority as the psychological counselor, with his degrees, training and education as if they exempt him from problems himself. The biblical counselor identifies with those he's seeking to help. He seeks to follow Jesus' example, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses; but was in all points tempted like as we are" (Hebrews 4:15). He knows he must be touched with the feeling of their weaknesses. Except by the grace of God, he would be in the same place they are.

He will often seek to help them by relating with them from his own struggles. Paul said, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). He helps people with the help he himself has received from God. "He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness" (Hebrews 5:2). He relates to them from his own struggles.

Biblical Counselors Utilize the Power of the Cross

Frequently, the problems of living have to do with what the psychological community calls addictions of some type or another. The Bible calls them sin. Once a person dabbles in any type of sin there is the possibility they might come under its control or bondage. Jesus said, "Whosoever commits sin is the servant (slave) of sin" (John 8:34). When we commit sin of any type, we are in danger of becoming its slave (addiction). There is power in the crucifixion (cross). We are to take our sin to the cross and crucify it.

Paul said, "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:11). If we nail the sin that haunts us to the cross it dies. If it is dead, it no longer holds us in its grip. Paul put it this way, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin" (Romans 6:2 and 6-7). A dead man can't do what he once did – he's dead!

Biblical Counselors Call Sin What it is

The psychological way has renamed nearly every sin there is. Adultery is now an affair, a drunkard an alcoholic and the list goes on. I read an article by a minister years ago who said he was praying one day and asked God to forgive him of his mistakes. He was immediately startled by the sense that God said NO. He prayed, "But God you're a forgiving God. What do you mean you won't forgive me for my mistakes?" He felt God speak clearly, "I don't forgive mistakes, I forgive sins." We must call sin for what it is if we are to find forgiveness and victory over it.

The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Confess means to say the same thing as. We are to call sin what God calls it if we are to truly experience forgiveness and victory over what holds us in its grip. Two verses prior to this we read, "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

There is a present continual sense in this verse which means the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses and keeps on cleansing us from all sin. The condition is walking in the light. According to the context, walking in the light refers to walking in the light of His exposure, never concealing anything from God. If we keep our sin exposed to God, never attempting to hide it, there's a continuous flow of His blood cleansing us of our sin. It is not merely that we are forgiven but it will eventually be cleansed out of our life completely. If we will keep

ourselves exposed to His revealing light, we will find both forgiveness and victory over our sin.

Biblical Counselors Take the Focus off Self

In most psychological counseling, even Christian counseling, the focus is on self, self-awareness, self-esteem, self-actualization, self-fulfillment and so on. True Biblical counseling takes the focus off self and places it on the person's relationship with God and others. The Bible teaches that God must be number one in every aspect of our lives. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other" and "Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:24 and 6:33). "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

Not only must we put God first but we must put other first as well. The Bible teaches us that we must not focus on ourselves but on those around us and their needs. We are not just to look out for number one. We are to have an attitude like that of Jesus. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:3-5).

I've noticed when I have been overwhelmed by problems and/or depressed and a person comes along that has a particular need, when I begin to minister to them and their need, all of the sudden my problems seem much less significant. We must get our eyes off of self and focus on God and others. This doesn't mean we should ignore our own needs but they shouldn't be our primary focus.

Biblical Counselors Deal with Guilt Properly

Psychologists tell us that much of people's problems stem from feelings of guilt. The way one deals with guilt is of utmost importance. Psychology typically attempts to excuse guilt. Paul makes it clear how guilt is usually dealt with. "Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Romans 2:15). Excusing guilt doesn't make it go away it just masks it temporarily. Guilt still remains under the surface. The accusing inevitably causes emotional turmoil.

There are times when people feel a false sense of guilt. In those times the counselor must help the person understand why their guilt is false. There are times the enemy of our soul attempts to accuse us and make us feel guilty about things we have no business feeling guilty about. The Bible calls him “the accuser of the brethren.” (Revelation 12:10). He accuses us day and night.

When this is the case, the biblical counselor must help the counselee understand what is taking place and engage in spiritual warfare with them. “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

However, there is usually a good reason why we feel guilty – because we’re guilty! There is only one way to properly deal with authentic guilt. The counselor must bring the person they are attempting to help to a place of repentance and confession of their sin. They must realize what they did was wrong – sin, be willing to turn from it (repent), confess it to God as sin and let Jesus’ blood cleanse them. King David was in such a place after his sin with Bathsheba. Guilt overcame him and he ran to God for forgiveness and cleansing and went on with his life. He said,

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, And You forgave the iniquity of my sin” (Psalm 32:1-5). Read also Psalm 51 and 2 Samuel 12.

Accountability is Imperative for the Biblical

Counselor to Effective

One of the few things that is good about The Twelve Step recovery system is its mandate of accountability. The biblical counselor must bring the counselee to a place of accountability. It may be himself or someone else he or the counselee chooses. The Bible says, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed” (James 5:16). I believe that besides prayer accountability is what this verse deals with. A person confesses their sin and they are therefore held accountable for it.

This can take place either with the counselor or it can often take place around the altar service at church. A person goes to the altar because of something they are struggling with. The altar worker prays with and for them. The worker may ask if there is something specific he would like prayer for. If the person feels open to the altar worker, they may confess what they are battling with. This is a good opportunity for the altar worker to bring them to a place of accountability. They may say something like, "If you ever feel tempted, I want you to call me and confess what you are struggling with, we can pray and meet as well if you'd like until the temptation subsides. This is what accountability is all about. It's not about condemnation but helping the person find victory in their life over what haunts them.

Biblical Counselors Teach Counselees to Hide

God's Word in their Heart

Every one struggles with things in one area or another. We all battle with our flesh. The best way to help someone gain victory over the problems of living is to get them to hide God's Word in their heart. David said, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Your Word. Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Psalms 119:9 and 11). The best way for someone to get victory over the problems of living is to hide the Word of God in their heart.

The Biblical counselor must know the Word, find scripture which pertains to the counselee's situation and challenge them to put it to memory. John wrote, "I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14). We all fall short but if we will hide the Word of God in our heart it will keep us from going down the slippery slope into the mire of sin and shame. "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide" (Psalms 37:31).

Biblical Counselors Listen

The Bible says, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). This verse indicates we should listen twice as much as we speak or give advise. It's interesting that we all have two ears and one mouth. Even psychological counselors listen. The difference is, all that psychological counselors seem to do is listen. They sit back and wait for you to figure out your own problems. They figure that if you talk long enough, you will figure out the solution to your problems yourself.

People come to counseling because they are in need of answers. Every counselor must spend time listening to the problems of the counselee. The Bible says, "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame unto him" (Proverbs 18:13). We must listen thoroughly before attempting to give an answer to people's problems. It's important we completely understand what the problem is before we attempt to give an answer or solution to the problem. Otherwise, it is possible we may not thoroughly understand the situation and give the wrong advise.

The job of the counselor is to listen to the problem of the counselee, be sure we completely understand the situation, then give them the best possible answer from the Word of God. We should probably spend twice our time intently listening and one third of our time advising. The point is, we must give biblical answers. We must be able to tell them what God says concerning their situation. They do not come to the counseling session to figure everything out themselves. If that were the case, they could do that all on their own.

The Goal of Biblical Counselors is Independence

Psychological counseling seems to make people dependent upon counseling. The biblical counselor's desire is to bring the counselee to dependence on God, trust in the scriptures, and learn how to apply God's Word to life himself. The biblical counselor does not want the counselee in constant dependence on them, but on God.

Twelve Steps Versus the Church

The Twelve Step Recovery System is one of the primary tools the world uses today to help people through their problems. Most problems of living deal with some type of addiction or sin. The world thinks the Twelve Step Recovery Program is the answer to most everything that plagues humanity.

Our Judicial System

Even our judicial system falls prey to this. If anyone gets in any kind of trouble with the law, it is insisted they begin attending some type of Twelve Step Recovery Group. It has even been adapted by most churches today. They label it, Celebrate Recovery, throw a Jesus tag on it, adapt the twelve steps and away they go.

The Church's Claim on the 12 Steps

Most Christians claim the twelve steps were originally Christian beginning with the Oxford Group, the world took it and the church needs to take it back from the world. This is a complete fallacy. The Oxford Group began with four principles or absolutes: honesty, purity, unselfishness and love which has little to do with the twelve steps. Dr. Bob and Bill Wilson pulled away from the Oxford Group because they were too evangelistic. They went on to develop the twelve steps on their own apart from the Oxford Group.

The 12 Step's Origin and Deception

The twelve steps do have elements of truth in them, which is what makes them so deceptive. The bits of truth are there to disguise the lie. Dr. Bob and Bill Wilson were actively having seances on a regular basis while developing the twelve steps. In their book, 12 Steps to Destruction, Martin and Deidre Bobgan show letters that Dr. Bob and Bill Wilson wrote to Carl Jung, the occult psychiatrist, thanking him for his contribution to their program. To say the Twelve Steps were originally Christian is a stretch beyond the imagination. They could not possibly be Christian with the origin it has.

The Cultic Nature of the 12 Steps

When a person begins recovery, the Twelve Step Recovery System insists on the first ninety days of recovery, ninety meetings are essential. If a person goes to a meeting every day for the first ninety days, it will inevitably have an impact on them to a point and the brain washing begins. Can you imagine if, when a person was first saved they went to church or some sort of a Bible study every day for the first ninety days? What a transformation that would take place! If the church insisted on a commitment of this sort, it would be labeled a cult.

The Twelve Step Recovery System is in itself cultic at best. It has no biblical basis and should be rejected by the church. Instead, just like psychology, the church has taken it up because it is acceptable to the world. God help us to avoid conformity to this world's system (Romans 12:2 and Matthew 6:8). "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8). The Twelve Step Recovery System must be rejected by the church in every aspect.

The Disease Aspect of the 12 Steps

One aspect of AA, NA and the Twelve Step Recovery Movement is that a person's addiction is labeled an illness or disease. They believe it to be a progressive disease and will worsens with time. This removes all personal responsibility of the individual. A person with a disease is a victim and has no control over their illness.

The Bible calls it sin and maintains it's a choice. It is true that when a person experiments or dabbles with any sin that in time it can become uncontrollable and unmanageable. Jesus put it this way, "whoever commits sin is (becomes) a slave of sin" (John 8:34).

Where's the Power and Authority of the Church?

What has happened to the power of Christ in the church? When Elijah was first taken from Elisha, his cloak fell on him and he cried out, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah" (2 Kings 2:14)? He went on to perform twice the miracles to that of Elijah. We need to once again begin to cry out similarly, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah, Smith Wigglesworth, D.L. Moody, Spurgeon, Finney, the Charismatic and Jesus Movement, etc.?"

Jesus came on the scene in the power of the Holy Ghost and people were set free from all that held them in bondage. He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18).

I was saved in the midst of the Charismatic and Jesus Movements and remember clearly people being totally set free and delivered from every addiction and bondage imaginable when they truly committed their life to Christ. The problem is the church doesn't seek God any longer. Most churches in our day no longer have altar calls, prayer meetings and have no times of [fasting and prayer](#). We no longer do what is necessary or "Pay the Price" in order to tap into the power of God.

A Biblical Analysis of the Twelve Steps

Many churches have adopted the 12 Step Recovery program into ministries within the church. Their reasoning for using the program is usually that the steps were originally part of the church, the world incorporated them into AA, NA, etc., and it's time the church took them back. This is simply not true as shown in Twelve Steps Versus the Church.

There are some elements of truths within the twelve steps, but this merely acts as a cloak of deception. If something is a blatant lie, no one would likely buy into it. The fact that there are hints of truths within many of the twelve steps is what makes its lie easier to swallow. It's not sufficient to simply throw a Jesus tag on the twelve steps and legitimize them, making them acceptable to the church. In this article we will comment briefly on each step, pointing out both the truth and error in the step as compared to scripture.

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol (other addiction, sin, or bondage) that our lives had become unmanageable. Yes, it is true that a person can, after experimenting with something, come under its control and be powerless over it. Jesus said, "whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34). We can become its slave and it become our master. The biblical term for this would be bondage rather than addiction.

On the other hand, it is the power of Christ that can sets us free from anything that attempts to hold us in its grip. Jesus is still in the delivering business (Matthew 1:21, Luke 4:18-19, Romans 11:26-27). The Bible says, we "can do all things through Christ who strengthens" us (Philippians 4:13). It also says that as born again believers God's "divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3).

2. We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. This has truth in it as well. The key is, what is the power source we are looking to? If we are looking to the one true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent (John 17:3), we are indeed tapping into the correct source of power (Philippians 4:13, 2 Peter 1:3). The problem comes when according to AA, NA, and the Twelve Step Recovery Movement our power source can be anything we choose.

3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. There are a number of problems with this statement.

- God cannot be reduced to our understanding. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah

55:8-9). When we attempt to reduce Him to our level of understanding, He inevitably becomes less than who He really is. God is above and beyond our understanding. Job said, “Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty” (Job 11:7)?

- Jesus as your higher power. Many claim they made Jesus their higher power, which is commendable. However, Jesus is not simply a “higher power” among a multiplicity of “higher powers” or a “god” among a multiplicity of “gods.” Jesus is the Most High God!
- No where in scripture are we ever told to turn our will over to anyone or anything – even God. We are to submit ourselves to God’s will and plan as Jesus and Paul did (Luke 22:42, Acts 21:8-14), but we continue to have free will.
- This step treads in dangerous territory. According to scripture, any generic or false “god” is actually a demon (Deuteronomy 32:16-17, 1 Corinthians 10:20). To turn our will over to some generic “god” could very well open us to demon possession or influence. We are turning our will and life over to their control. Beware!

4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. Making a moral inventory of ourselves and our behavior is always good. Paul challenged, “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?” (2 Corinthians 13:5). However, we are not always the best ones to examine ourselves.

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12). It’s much wiser to ask God or the Holy Spirit to examine us. The Psalmist prayed, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my thoughts” (Psalm 139:23). He does a much better job than we do. We are influenced by our flesh.

5. We admitted to God, ourselves and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. Confession is always good. We’re told “confession is good for the soul.” It’s never good to keep our sins and faults to ourselves. It has an affect on us spiritually, emotionally, mentally and even physically.

- Confession in general: “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will find compassion” (Proverbs 28:13).
- Confession to God: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

- Confession to those we've wronged: "If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).
- Confession for prayer, healing and accountability: "Confess your sins (faults) to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed" (James 5:16).

6. We are entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. Only God can change us. However, we need to be ready and willing to allow Him to change us. This is what the new birth is all about (John 3:3). "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides for ever" (1 Peter 1:23). "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Be sure you have the right God!

7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. Once we are willing and ready for God to change our lives, we must simply ask. We must, however, be calling on the right God, not some generic "god" of our own making and understanding. He says, "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3). "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). In the context, this has to do with believing in Jesus, that He died for our sins, rose from the dead and confessing Him as Lord of our life (Romans 10:8-10). "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame or disappointed" (Romans 10:11).

8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all. This has to do with going to the person you have wronged, confessing the wrong, and asking them to forgive you. The Bible says, "if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).

9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. This, of course, has much to do with the previous step. In the previous step we had to be willing to make amends and here we must do whatever is necessary to make right the wrong we have done. You must attempt to "be reconciled to your brother" (Matthew 5:24).

10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. This is a continuation of previous steps dealing with confession and inventory. Again, it is best to ask God to make continuous inventory of our lives on a daily basis. Our

personal inventory can be misleading and deceptive. Ask God to show you where we have wronged Him or anyone else and then set forth to make it right.

11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

There are a few disturbing things in this step.

- According to this step, how does one improve their conscious contact with God? The only way to make contact with God is through His Son Jesus. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).
- This is still a generic “god.” The true and living God cannot be reduced to our understanding and still be God. Our concept of God must be viewed through the revelation of Himself in scripture.
- Knowledge of His will must be sought through scripture and the Holy Spirit. “Through Prayer” to a generic “god” opens a pandoras box of potential demonic influence.
- Meditation on anything other than the true and living God and His Word is strictly forbidden in scripture (Psalms 1:2-3, Joshua 1:8). People are increasingly turning to various forms of Eastern meditation, Hinduism, yoga and the twelve steps. In these meditative practices is a worldview in conflict with biblical spirituality. Christians must not use any form of meditation other than what is found in scripture.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics (addicts) and to practice these principles in all our affairs. This step is riddled with heresy.

- “Practice these principles in all our affairs.” Make no mistake about it, the Twelve Step Recovery Movement (AA, NA, etc.) is a religion and a false one. The idea of practicing these principles places these steps on plateau above that of the Bible. For a Christian to prioritize the twelve steps above God’s Word is nothing short of Idolatry. Not to mention how Twelve Steppers exalt “The Big Book” above the Word of God.

- “Carry this message.” The propagation of the twelve steps is prioritized above that of the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15). If this doesn’t make the 12 Step Recovery Movement a religion, it at least mimics a religion very closely.
- “Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps.” A spiritual awaking comes as a result of realizing we’re a sinner and turning to Christ for forgiveness or a move of the Holy Spirit bringing revival, not “as the result of these steps.” This phase is so deceptive. I have known those who were convinced they were born again because of this phrase and they had absolutely no understanding of Jesus, redemption or what the new birth actually means.

The Future of the Church

I recently found notes from a sermon shared by my mentor and overseer, Dr. Paul E. Paino, in June of 2000. As I read the outline, I was amazed by how prophetic and applicable they are not only for the church today, but also for its future. This is his message for the church and oh how we need it.

I remember the message like it was yesterday. It was a serious message, for if I remember correctly, he was dealing with some health issues and didn't know how much longer he had. Because of this, he requested a special meeting of the local pastors in order to share his heart with them. By God's grace and to our benefit, he remained with us for another five years. Here's what He shared.

The Church is Facing a Shift in Family Values

In 2000, when Pastor Paino preached this message, fifty-six percent of adults were married. In 1972 seventy-five percent of adults were married. There are many single parents in churches today and there will be even more in the future. There will be many children who've had a negative example of marriage modeled to them by their parents and others. We must be ready to minister to these folks and not simply blast them from our pulpits. They need truth and grace as they face the future (Colossians 4:4-6).

Commitment Will Become a Lost Virtue

Commitment in general is at an all-time low. We are not committed to local businesses, one another, our marriages or the church. It's difficult to find people who are truly committed to the local church – in attendance, service or tithing. This is and will continue to be frustrating to pastors. Remember, Elijah also experienced frustration, discouragement and despair. Like Elijah, we will at times feel completely alone and must hear the voice of God clearly to have the strength to press on (1 Kings 19).

The Church Will Disregard Human Responsibility

Sin will no longer be called sin, but sickness. Sadly, many churches have already started to adopt this view. There is no difference between the world and the church, virtually no standards at all. We must take care when dealing with this not to impose legalism on people. There are certain restrictions the Holy Spirit wants to give all of us, but he must be the one who brings conviction (John 16:8 and Romans 14:5).

The Church Will Follow the World Instead of Leading

We see this in morality, culture, political correctness, and fads. As the world goes, so goes the church. The church should be leading the world and not the other way around. If we are to be a true New Testament church, we must seek God for his direction and lead the way again. The testimony of the world should be, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too" (Acts 17:6).

Social and Cultural Groups Will Continue to Divide the World

Things we thought would bring people together have clearly failed. There is more of a divide than ever with regard to race, religion, social status, gender, economics, etc. Only "in Christ" can there ever be unity. Paul said, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

Para-Church Organizations Will Begin to Diminish

That is, those ministries and organizations that work outside the framework of the local church. Can you imagine if all the support going to para-church organizations went to the local church? What the church could accomplish! Read "Unleashing the Church" by Frank Tillapaugh.

The Church Will Refuse to Recognize Absolute Truth

There will be a rationalization of disobedience to the will of God. We see this today like never before. We rationalize the Word of God to fit our cultural practices or societal norms. We must remember, “There is a way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12).

There Will be a Return to More Traditional Behavior

Casualness has damaged productivity and respect. It has encouraged disrespect for leadership and authority. We must not get caught up in what is popular at the time.

Church Leaders Will Realize Glitz, Hype and Showmanship Don't Work

People are hungry for a deep relationship, encounter and experience with the Holy Spirit, not more entertainment. They long for a true encounter with God, a real revival sent by Him, not parlor tricks from the platform.

The Church Will be Forced to Become Active in Ministry

The church must move from inward ministry to outward. If we continue to focus inwardly, the church will die. We must go out into the highways and byways, where the people are. The church must mobilize for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12). The Dead Sea is dead because there is no outlet. In order for the church to flourish, it must minister outside itself (Acts 1:8).

The Church Will Face a Period of Persecution

The church has always flourished during times of persecution. The twenty-first century church is no different. Jesus, speaking of the end of the age said, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew

24:21). Will we remain faithful in the midst of it? “The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time” (Revelation 12:12). The time is upon us! It’s coming, but are we ready for it?

The Church Will Experience a Period of Renewed Focus

The good news is, God’s people will return to focusing on eternity, and not the temporal. The church will also have a renewed focus on the spiritual; to seek first the face of God and not worry about what the world thinks. The church will once again “seek first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33). It was Jonathan Edwards who prayed, “Lord, stamp eternity on my eyeballs.”

What Happened to the Praying Church?

Lacking the Power of Prayer

There is power in prayer. Prayer is one of the most untapped resources of the church and the body of Christ. Today's church gathers for coffee, donuts and fellowship rather than prayer. Whatever happened to the prayer and tarrying meetings of yesteryear? "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

To Busy to Pray

This is the very reason why we are not seeing the power of God manifest in our midst today. R.A. Torrey said it ever so clearly, "We are too busy to pray, and so we are too busy to have power. We have a great deal of activity, but we accomplish little. Many services, but few conversions; much machinery, but few results."

I am just old enough to remember, as a young man, arriving at church to see the altars filled with people praying. I can remember the time when we had a great worship service, sermon and altar call followed by people lingering around the altar seeking the face of God. A sight rarely seen today. We have forgotten the promise of God, "You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

The Delivering Power of Prayer

The power of God fell on Pentecost because the 120 were gathered in prayer. "These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer" (Acts 1:14). The lame man was healed as Peter and John were on their way to the temple to pray (Acts 3:1).

Peter was arrested and “kept in prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God” and as a result he was set free and after his release he “went to the house of Mary, where many were gathered together and were praying” (Acts 12:5 and 12).

Lacking Intimacy with God

We are not only lacking the power of God in today’s church but also intimacy with God. The essence of the life of the believer should be in knowing God. “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

The writers of scripture actually knew God intimately. Paul said, “I know whom I have believed” (2 Timothy 1:12). “That I may know Him” (Philippians 3:10). This was the Apostle Paul’s longing and should be ours as well.

I pray the Spirit of God will stir within you, afresh and anew, a longing for God and His power.

“As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (Psalm 42:1-2).

About Ministrymaker

Originally formed as a church corporation in 1989, our organization developed into an online church planting, leadership training, and ministry support site in 2001. Ministrymaker Ministries provides training, mentoring, support, and restoration to men and women entering the ministry, starting a church, or wanting to expand an existing congregation. We help people from all walks of life become better preachers, teachers, and ministry leaders.

Ministrymaker Ministries has received a mandate from God to gather together leaders, ministers, and churches of like precious faith. The vehicle He has raised up for this gathering of leadership is Ministrymaker Ministerial Fellowship. For more information, [watch this message](#) from Dr. Linton.

Our Philosophy

Ministrymaker Ministries is spirit-filled, charismatic, and trinitarian. We know this covers a wide range of churches, denominations, and movements. By this, we basically mean that we believe in the fullness of the Spirit and that all of the gifts and manifestations of the Holy Spirit are for today. Many take the position that the fivefold ministry (Ephesians 4:11) and the manifestations of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7-11) passed away with the original twelve apostles and the completion of scripture. We believe all of the Bible and that these gifts are still present within the church.

Our ministry is experientially and doctrinally balanced, rejecting most extremes. However, as with most extremes, there is usually an element of truth. The problem is with man, not with God, or what the Holy Spirit is wanting to emphasize. What typically happens is there is a move of the Holy Spirit in the church. People get excited and take the truth to a far extreme, which becomes error. When attempting to correct the error, they take it to the other extreme, which is also error. Biblical balance is usually found somewhere in the middle. Read our [statement of faith](#) to find out more about what we believe.

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