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TRAINING 1

Transforming Congregations through Great Commission Ministry

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Pre-Onsite Training Narrative & Workshop Guide

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GO Center Resources

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GO Training 1 is organized without the use of page numbers. Rather, the manual is numerically sectioned as 1.0, 2.0, etc. This is reflected in the *Table of Contents* to enable easy location of the contents. This method of enumeration was selected in order to make the manual expandable without disturbing the numerical sequencing of page numbers. So, should a manual user desire to insert notes or other materials into the manual, that can be done without changing section numbers. For example, should five pages be added into the body of section 4.0, the next section would continue to begin at 5.0.

GO Training 1 is uniquely designed for two purposes. First, it's to be used as preparation for further training to follow - **GO Training 2**, typically presented live and onsite and including extensive workshops. Second, however, **GO Training 1** is comprehensive and can be used as complete training for revitalization by individuals in a self-study format or by groups, teams or entire congregations. Specific implementation guidelines are laid out in Section 11.0 - NOW WHAT? Please read through these guidelines before beginning your GO Training journey. Note that a consultation with a GO Center Missional Ministry Partner before selecting the Vision Team is encouraged. Contact Ken Priddy.

When used as preparation for further training, the GO Center encourages an in-depth and thorough study of **GO Training 1** in order to lay the foundation for the best possible live onsite and/or online training experience to follow. When used as comprehensive training in revitalization, the GO Center encourages the engagement of one of our Missional Ministry Partners for ongoing consultation and coaching. In either case, follow the **GO Training 1 Workshop Guide** found in Section 11.0 of the **GO Training 1** manual titled **NOW WHAT?** Find out more at www.gocenterinfo.com or contact Dr. Ken Priddy. Contact info is included on the last page of this manual.

Enjoy & God Bless!

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1.0 – A CALL to ACTION

In the United States, true evangelical churches share at least two things in common. First, if they're truly evangelical, they share the conviction that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God and that it's the only reliable guide as to what we are to believe as followers of Christ and how we are to live. Second, over 80% of them are in plateau or decline. These two commonalities shouldn't exist side by side and yet they do, and they have existed side by side for at least the past thirty years with no end in sight. This must change, it can change, and, by the grace of God, it will change; starting here, starting now. Are you in?

GO Training is an approach to revitalization that is centered on Great Commission Ministry. Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, gave final instructions before He ascended into heaven. He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age," (Matthew 28:18-20). The simple truth is that if the evangelical church would fully embrace this clear biblical instruction, seizing it as a call to action and responding to that call with all its heart, soul, mind and strength, the current tide of plateau and decline could be turned and would be turned. Are you in?

Many approaches to revitalization place an emphasis on program improvement, proposing that if we continue to do what have been doing conventionally, only better, our churches would shake free from plateau or decline and move into new seasons of growth. That's a logical assumption but it's a wrong assumption with no proof to stand behind it. One way of stating the reality is that 20th century program methodology is not effective in 21st century USA. Just as the new wine of Christianity could not be held in the old wineskins of Judaism, the new wine of 21st century effectiveness cannot be held in the old wineskins of 20th century methodology. Dorothy comes to mind, "Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore!" The need is not for improvement but for transformation, moving from conventional programs crafted for a church-friendly American culture to the Great Commission Ministry of *GOING* to reach a church-resistant American culture, and *GOING* is not a program. *GOING* is a process, a Great Commission process. Are you in?

GO Training answers the WHY, the WHAT, the WHO and the HOW of congregational revitalization through Great Commission Ministry Transformation. **GO Training I** is the **Pre-Training Narrative & Workshop Guide**. Church leaders and all in a congregation who are entering the GO Center Revitalization Process will jumpstart revitalization and maximize the value of further training by completing this manual in its entirety prior to **GO Training II** that will most likely be presented on-site a few months into the process. ARE YOU IN?

The GO Center

The GO Center is your Resource, Friend and Ally as you are Equipped and Empowered for Great Commission Ministry.

The Mission of the GO Center is Simple and Clear:
To Inspire Hope – To Instill Vision – To Inform Strategy – To Invigorate Action

Finding Who's Missing & Bringing Them Home!

LET'S DO THIS!

2.0 - THE GREAT COMMISSION

Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Mark 16:14-20

¹⁴ Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷ And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸ they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."

¹⁹ So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.

Luke 24:44-49

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

John 20:19-22

¹⁹ On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Acts 1:8

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The hope for the future of the American evangelical church is firmly rooted in our commitment to living out the Great Commission by the grace and to the glory of God.

Record your thoughts:

3.0 - THE COSMIC PICTURE

3.1 Catching a Vision of God

God has a vision for your church, but that's not the place to begin. Before considering a Vision *from* God, begin with a vision *of* God. What is God's vision for Himself? Why does God do what He does? What is God's end game?

God does what He does for His own glory. Our tendency as self-interested creatures is to think that God does what He does because He loves us, that we are the proverbial apple of His eye. While we benefit greatly by being His children, it's not about us. It's about Him and His glory. Consider all that Scripture has to say about the glory of God. We exist to glorify Him. We exist to love Him, to serve Him, to worship Him. He is the center of our spiritual universe and we orbit around Him. What's He up to?

Consider these visionary Scriptures:

Isaiah's Beatific Vision - Isaiah 6:1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple.² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.³ And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.⁵ And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar.⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

⁸ And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."

Paul's Macedonian Vision - Acts 16:6-10

⁶ And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.⁷ And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.⁸ So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas.⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."¹⁰ And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

John's Great Multitude Vision - Revelation 7:9-12

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,¹² saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

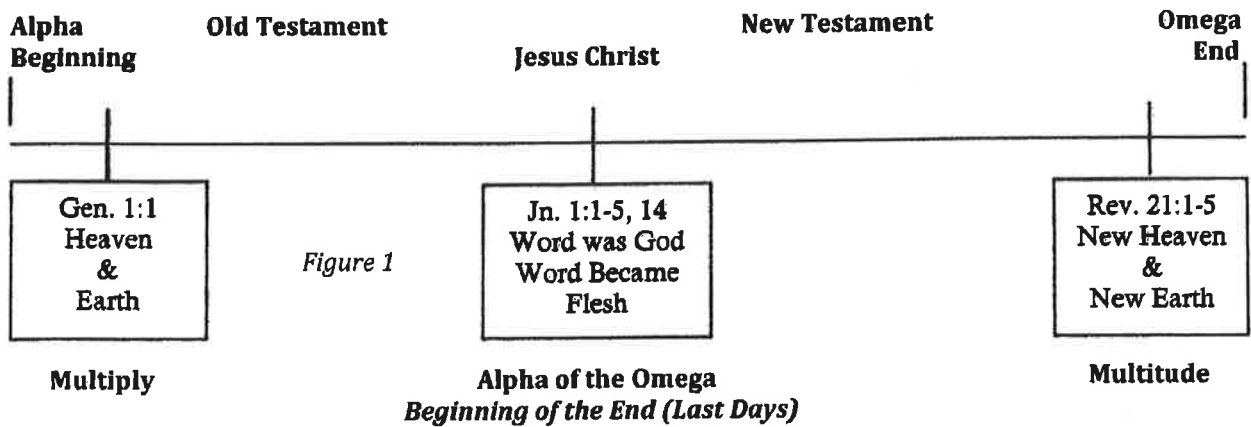
God's Eternal Vision - Revelation 21:3

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."

3.2 The Timeline of Redemption

God is a sovereign God with an eternal kingdom vision. He envisions an eternal family that will glorify Him forever. He will be their God and Father; they will be His people and family. How is God gathering this family?

God has suspended a timeline inside of eternity that stretches from the beginning to the end, from Alpha to Omega, from Genesis to Revelation (*Figure 1*). In Genesis, at the beginning of time, God reveals the first glimpse of His covenant with His people, saying, "be fruitful and multiply." In Revelation, at the end of time, God reveals the fulfillment of that covenant as John the Apostle shares his vision of a "multitude too numerous to count." Here's the strategic question: How is God going to move His family from the *multiply* of Genesis to the *multitude* of Revelation? Answer: every second of every day, all along the Timeline of Redemption, God is calling men, women, and children to Himself through regeneration. He is building His family, one living stone at a time. This will continue until the full number has been brought home, until that multitude is fully gathered. This is God's vision, God's plan, for Himself.



Vital 180s

Many default positions that congregations hold prove faulty, perhaps the result of past viewpoints that are no longer reliable but that remain in place nevertheless. Several will be revealed in this document. The first is this:

*It's NOT God's plan for my life BUT my life for God's plan.
It's NOT God's vision for our church BUT our church for God's vision.*

Yes, God does have a plan for our lives and a vision for our churches, but the higher priority is God's plan and vision for Himself. By giving ourselves to His plan and His vision for Himself, we will find His plan and His vision for us and our churches.

Vital 180
*NOT God's plan for my life BUT my life for God's plan.
 NOT God's vision for our church BUT our church for God's vision.*

Figure 2

3.3 Respond to Sender

Elvis gave us *Return to Sender*. The challenge for the evangelical church is to *Respond to Sender*. God the Father is a sending God and it's significant to note that Jesus is both the One Sent and the One Sending. The Apostle John writes,

¹⁹On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." John 20:19-21

This is why the Great Commission is called the Great **CO**-Mission. God the Son was sent on His mission by God the Father. Then God the Son sent His disciples, then and now, on their co-mission. Yet, rare is the church, even the evangelical church, that makes *GOING* a ministry priority. Our tendency is to place much more emphasis on what happens inside the church than on what happens outside the church in the community. For example, Sunday preaching is given a top priority as the pinnacle of the weekly service with many hours of preparation given to the sermon and to other elements of the Sunday service. But consider this, the Apostle Paul suggests that the outsider's hearing of proclamation trumps the preacher's proclamation to insiders. The primary issue is not who's preaching or what's being said but who's listening, who's hearing what's being said. Paul writes,

¹³For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

¹⁴How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" Romans 10:13-15

HOW ARE THEY TO PREACH UNLESS THEY ARE SENT? The thrust of this text is the sending, not the preaching. The Good News preached becomes effective when heard by the outsider, the one who is lost. Our God is a sending God. Are we willing to be a sent people? Are we willing to be a *GOING* people?

Record your thoughts:

3.4 The Program-Scripted Church

The American evangelical church of the past one-hundred years is highly vested in program ministry. Whether those programs are traditional or conventional in nature, the modern attractional model or seeker model, or the post-modern casual, rock band, low-key teaching model, the central organizing motif is the same – ministry-by-programs. This might be identified as the Program-Scripted Church.

As the name implies, there is a script that is followed, not necessarily by design but surely by default. Without even considering alternatives, the church's ministry is program-driven. Staffing is determined by programs, space is allocated according to programs, budgets are formulated according to programs, and volunteers are recruited to man the programs. There is a sense that effectiveness is a product of well-run programs and the seemingly well-run program follows a very predictable path that has been laid out over decades of historical and habitual program patterns.

Giving the benefit of the doubt that this program-scripted approach to ministry worked in the past, it no longer works today. Simply put, if most churches are program-driven, or at least aspire to be, and most churches are in plateau or decline, it stands to reason that the program-scripted approach to ministry must give way to something different, something new, something fresh, something innovative.

Ironically, to go forward we must go back, not back to the ministry of the past fifty years, but back to the ministry of the apostles who were commanded to go and make disciples. The church must focus anew on the making of disciples and not the running of programs. For most churches, this will require a significant change, a change from program ministry to Great Commission process ministry.

If we do not change our direction, we are
likely to end up where we are headed.

= Chinese Proverb =

Figure 3

Questions: If your church continues exactly as it is today, what will your church's ministry look like in five years? In other words, where are you headed? Is your church among the over 80% that are in plateau or decline?

3.5 Where's the Hope?

The first plank in the GO Center's mission is to inspire hope, but perhaps, in what you've seen so far, there seems to be more bad news than good news concerning the state of ministry in your church. While it's important to take stock of current realities, we don't have to stay in a negative posture. We can, by the grace of God, turn ministry around. Consider this directive:

Ready-Fire-Aim!

Experience and observation over the years have shown that church leaders tend to make a fundamental mistake when entering into a revitalization initiative. If outreach and evangelism are seen as targeted ministry activities, they are seen as *future* targeted ministry activities. There is a sense that the congregation will need a season, perhaps one or two years, of preparation for *GOING*. However, the leading cause of plateau and decline in churches is their tendency to become more and more self-focused over time, pouring more and more ministry into their own congregations while the gap between congregation and community gets wider and wider. Devoting a lengthy season of so-called preparation for *GOING* is simply another exercise in self-focus and serves as more of an impediment to *GOING* than as a catalyst. The longer the delay in *GOING* the greater the risk of never *GOING* as the motivation for revitalization wanes. Unrealized promises of turning ministry around demoralizes congregations and damages the credibility of leaders.

Here's the really good news. Your congregation is already ready to be sent out from the church into the community. Your people know enough Bible and theology, each person has a personal testimony that could be shared, and everyone in the congregation is already imbedded in a number of relational circles of people that are populated with folks who are living outside of the family of God. This is the plentiful harvest Jesus speaks of in Matthew 9, the fields white for harvest in John 4. Our congregations are already ready, so since we're **READY . . . FIRE!**

Consider this tweet that was shared by John Piper some years ago:

As a strategy for missions, ready, fire, aim is a much better strategy than ready, aim, aim, aim, aim, aim . . .

3.6 Two Revitalization Platforms: Spiritual Renewal with Strategic Initiative

Healthy, holistic revitalization that embraces both the Great Commandment and the Great Commission is built on two platforms: Spiritual Renewal with Strategic Initiative. Church leaders tend to lean toward one or the other, but each without the other is incomplete. When leaders favor Spiritual Renewal they engage in such activities as prayer, revival-driven events, spiritual retreats and other such elements. Each of these has its place in the overall process of revitalization, but, without Strategic Initiative, these tend to be momentary blips on the ministry radar screen that come and go with goosebumps and heartfelt commitments but with no action steps that create sustainable change and Great Commission outcomes. They produce spiritual pep rallies and not much more.

When leaders favor Strategic Initiative they engage in planning, training and the deployment of new and perhaps innovative methodologies and other strategic and tactical elements. Again, each of these elements has its place in the overall process of revitalization, but, without Spiritual Renewal, these tend to be manipulative rather than transforming, resulting in momentary statistical spiking but no sustainable Great Commission outcomes.

So, one without the other is incomplete and unsustainable, but when combined, Spiritual Renewal with Strategic Initiative centered on Great Commission Ministry sparks sustainable multiplication that builds congregations from within and reaches communities from without.

3.7 The Nehemiah Model

One prominent biblical model of Spiritual Renewal with Strategic Initiative can be found in the Book of Nehemiah. Chapter 1 reads:

¹The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.

Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, ²that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. ³And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire."

⁴As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. ⁵And I said, "O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁶let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. ⁷We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. ⁸Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, ⁹but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.' ¹⁰They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. ¹¹O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

Now I was cupbearer to the king.

The passage begins by informing that Nehemiah was conducting an assessment. He asked about the Jews who had survived the exile and that had returned to Jerusalem. He wanted an update, a report. The report was grim: 1. The remnant was in great trouble and shame, 2. the wall of Jerusalem was broken down, and 3. the gates were destroyed. Trouble and shame are rather general but clearly the implication was that the remnant was struggling. Walls down and gates destroyed rendered the remnant highly vulnerable to its enemies as they were wide open, unprotected.

Nehemiah's first response is a spiritual response. This very physical condition and predicament that the remnant was facing would first be addressed tactically with a spiritual emphasis. We're told that, for days, an extended period of time, Nehemiah wept and mourned, fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. Nehemiah's priority was a spiritual priority. Surely, his prayer would likely include prayer for specific physical, tangible elements, but what is shared in Scripture are prayers dripping of spiritual petition. He prayed for God's listening ear to hear and he acknowledged that God was the keeper of the covenant, implying that, if there had been a breach of covenant, it had been on the part of the people not on the part of God. He offered intercessory prayers of repentance on behalf of the people and confessed the sins of himself and his own family. He reminded God that there are negative consequences for disobedience but positive consequences for returning to Him. This was more of a reminder for himself and perhaps any hearers of his prayer than a reminder for God who needs no reminding. Further, Nehemiah's prayers framed a future restoration of a people redeemed by the power of God and a people delighting in worship and respect for God.

Clearly, Nehemiah was seeking Spiritual Renewal but there was more. At the very end of the chapter, Nehemiah's prayer took a sudden turn to a different emphasis and a different genre of prayer. Moving from an emphasis on Spiritual Renewal, Nehemiah prayed for success and he prayed for mercy in the sight of "this" man. Success in what? What man?

The man in view is the king, Artaxerxes. Nehemiah informed that his position in the king's court was cupbearer to the king. He was the taste-tester, not checking to see if the food or drink was properly prepared or seasoned, but whether or not the food or drink had been poisoned. Assassination of royalty was a common occurrence in that day and poisoning was a preferred method for such assassinations. Nehemiah stood between the king and death by poisoning, a highly valuable and trusted position. Again, what success was Nehemiah envisioning and why did he need mercy from the king?

Apparently, during those days of weeping and mourning, fasting and praying, something had occurred to Nehemiah. He realized that someone needed to return to Jerusalem to address the sorry condition of God's people there, and he concluded that he was the one who needed to step into that role. However, as cupbearer to the king and as an enslaved, exiled Hebrew himself, he couldn't just leave Persia of his own accord and head to Jerusalem. He needed the permission of the king and could surely benefit from the support of the king. In other words, Nehemiah was ready to take Strategic Initiative, but he would need help in so doing, the help of the king, and, more importantly, the help of God. Providentially, he received both.

Help from the king came from permission to return to Jerusalem and even an appointment to serve as governor. Help from God was demonstrated repeatedly by a phrase seen again and again throughout the Book of Nehemiah explaining that the hand of his God was upon him. One particular moment worth noting was the completion of the rebuilding of the wall, captured in Nehemiah 6:15:

¹⁵ So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days.

Nehemiah led his people by seeking Spiritual Renewal and by combining that renewal with Strategic Initiative.

Questions: In what ways does your church engage in Spiritual Renewal? In what ways does your church engage in Strategic Initiative? Does your church tend to favor one over the other? What value do you see in combining Spiritual Renewal with Strategic Initiative?

3.8 Summary Points of THE COSMIC PICTURE:

1. **Catching a Vision of God** – Begin with a *vision of God* before moving into discerning a *vision from God*.
2. **The Timeline of Redemption** – God is sovereignly building His eternal family by moving from the multiply of Genesis to the multitude of Revelation.
3. **God is a Sending God** – Jesus is both the One Sent and the One Sending.
4. *If we do not change direction, we are likely to arrive at where we are headed.*
5. **Ready - Fire - Aim!** We're already *ready* to reach into the community through outreach and evangelism. So, let's GO!
6. **Great Commission Ministry Transformation** is built on the two complementary ministry platforms of **Spiritual Renewal with Strategic Initiative**.

NOTES:

4.0 – THE COMMUNITY PICTURE

God is a sovereign God with an eternal vision to bring glory to Himself by gathering an eternal family that will glorify Him forever. He will be their God and they will be His people. That is the cosmic picture, almost incomprehensible in its vastness and its scope that travels beyond space and time. It's important for church leaders to have a sense of this cosmic vision as a starting point for paradoxically having a *vision* of the *invisible* church. But what about the visible church? What about a local church in a local community that navigates ministry inside of space and time? How do leaders zoom in from the 30,000-foot view, or perhaps the 30 billion-foot view, to a vision of a singular local church?

4.1 Key Vision Question

Begin with a **Key Vision Question**: How does God want to express Himself through our church in our community at this time? Notice that within this question there are **Four Vision Dynamics**:

1. It's **God's vision** first and foremost, not our own. Vision in the church is not about creativity; it's about discernment. The objective is not to be clever, creative, unique, innovative or groundbreaking. The objective is to hear God's voice as He guides us into His vision. We're not starting with a blank canvas, attempting to create a masterpiece of our own design that sets us apart from every church that is in our current reality or every church that has gone before us. We're starting with a very full canvas painted with the brush strokes of God. It's called the Bible. In searching the Scriptures, we discover God's intentions for THE church and then apply His biblical intentions for THE church to OUR church. Granted, that application invites our creativity, uniqueness and innovation, but harnesses them for moving God's vision forward, a means to an end, rather than their being an end in themselves. In theological terms we could think of this as a blending of ecclesiology and missiology into practical application and implementation. In short, we ask and answer the question, "What does God expect from His church?"
2. It's God's vision for expressing Himself **through our church**. We must narrow our focus to our own church and not become overly concerned about what God might be doing in some other church. We need be neither competitive nor envious, nor do we need to imitate the ministries of other churches. The trend in our day is to spotlight churches that are experiencing outcomes beyond the ordinary and declare them "models" of how ministry should be done. We read their books and attend their conferences to learn the "secret" to ministry success. However, giving the benefit of the doubt, these churches are rarely new models that all of Christendom should replicate. These are testimonies of what God is doing through those churches and should be seen as such. It's fine to be encouraged and even inspired by kingdom gains that are occurring in other churches, but rarely are these churches true models. Again, they're anecdotal testimonies. Our focus needs to be squarely on God's visionary leading for our church.
3. It's God's vision for expressing Himself through our church **in our community**. Again, what's working productively in another community might bear no relation to what is productive in our community. Consider this perspective from Stetzer and Putman:

Sometimes a pastor will get excited about a model or a method learned at a conference. Then the pastor will come home and import that model into the community. Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't. Most of the time, it does not work as well. Why? Because the methods and models that God uses in one place does not mean he will use them in another place. The fact that a missional breakthrough occurred in Seattle does not mean that God will use the same methods in Sellersburg, Indiana.

Here is a better process to learn from others:

1. *Calling from God*
2. *Exegeting the community*
3. *Examining ways God is working in similar communities*
4. *Finding God's unique vision for your church*
5. *Adjusting that vision as you learn the context*

Ed Stetzer & David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community*, p. 21.

4. It's God's vision for expressing Himself through our church in our community **at this time**. Change is a constant in today's world and the pace of change has accelerated to exponential proportions. Technology, media, ease of communication and unlimited access to information have compressed time into tighter and tighter segments. In short, 20th century approaches to ministry have little effect in 21st century USA. Leith Anderson laments, "Yesterday's church keeps hoping that tomorrow will be 1954," (*Dying for Change*, p. 141). Tomorrow won't be 1954. In fact, it won't even be 2010. The core of our faith is, of course, unchanging, but our ministry delivery systems must adapt to rapidly changing culture, just as Paul was a Greek to the Greeks and a Jew to the Jews.

Record your thoughts:

4.2 The "B" Attitudes

Border the Community – Identify Geographic Target/Demographic Target(s)

Create a local mission footprint that clearly identifies the primary geographic boundaries around your church. Then identify the various demographic groups inside of those boundaries, narrowing the focus to one or two demographic groups that we are called and equipped to reach.

Bridge to the Community – Close Cultural Gaps

In most communities, the resident population goes through demographic shifts at a much faster rate than the demographics of a congregation, often creating cultural gaps between church and community that make ministry to the community difficult. Those cultural gaps must be closed.

Bless the Community – Meet Needs/Meet Interests

Abraham was told that he would be a blessing to all nations, not just to Israel, as God's goodness would pour out on all people. As vessels of goodness, and as good neighbors, we must bless the community. A place to start can be found in meeting community needs and connecting with community interests.

Become Known in the Community – Increase Visibility/Increase Profile

Churches often become invisible in their own communities, just part of the background of community life that is largely unnoticed and might not be missed were they not there. Efforts need to be made to increase the visibility and community profile in a positive way so that the church is not only noticed, but is seen as a value to the community.

Build Trust in the Community - Be a Good Neighbor/Positive Perception

American culture provides no help to the church these days, and, if anything, discourages people from connecting with pastors, churches or Christians in general. That negative persona can be overcome through the building of trust over long stretches of time.

Bear Witness in the Community - Be Salt & Light/Church in the World

Though American communities are largely in spiritual darkness these days, we have the light in the love and message of Jesus Christ. We must be difference makers, game changers. By placing ourselves in close relationships with the people of the community, the Holy Spirit can work through us and in them to bring redemption to the lost, to bring light to the darkness.

4.3 Biblical Foundations for Reaching the Community

God the Father has a vision of a church and for a church that reaches a community with the love, grace, mercy and saving knowledge of God the Son, and then grows the reached into mature disciples. We will begin the process of identifying this vision with Biblical Foundations. These basic foundations are drawn from Scripture to provide a sure platform upon which to discern and build God's vision. Arguably every page, if not every verse, of the Bible could be included in such an exercise, but that would be overwhelming, so seminal references and applications that form a direct line to God's vision for the church have been mined. Leaders should feel free to add others, but start here and build on what is found.

First in line are six Scripture passages that constitute a biblical mandate of six *Greats*.

The Great Promise - Matthew 16:13-18: This passage opens with Jesus' conducting a survey, a man-on-the-street inquiry or poll. "Who do people say that the Son of Man is," He asks His disciples. They respond with a smattering of varied opinions, John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Then Jesus cuts to the chase, asking the question upon which all of eternal life hangs. "But who do you say that I am," He queries. Simon replies, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus acknowledges that Simon has answered correctly and refers to him as blessed. Why is he blessed? Is it because he delivered the right answer and is therefore receiving a blessing as a reward? No, that's not the case at all. He is blessed because the Father has revealed the true identity of Jesus to him so that he could respond correctly.

At this point Jesus shifts from referring to Simon as Simon and addresses him as Peter, or *Petros* in the Greek, from the same root word as the word "rock," *petra* in the Greek. Jesus goes on to say that upon this rock He will build His church. Now, are we to believe that Peter is actually the rock upon which the church of Jesus Christ will be built? Well, yes and no. The text does suggest that very thing, and Peter is pivotal in the founding of the church from the first sermon at Pentecost to his vision of opening the Gospel to the Gentiles to his letters to the church that are included in the New Testament. It's interesting to note that Peter's language in his letters is filled with rock and stone imagery.

We must note, however, that this is not the first mention of Simon as the rock. In John 1:42, Andrew brings his brother, Simon, to meet Jesus, and upon that first meeting, Jesus says, "So you are Simon Son of John? Your name shall be called Cephas," a name derived from the root word for "rock" in Aramaic. Could it be that at this moment we have come to know as Peter's Confession that Simon has grown into his new name, *Petros*, *Cephas*, the rock?

There is more to the church's rock foundation than Simon Peter. There is the rock of revelation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. God the Father reveals through God the Spirit that God the Son is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Savior and the Lord. It's upon this revelation that the church is being built as every second of every day men, women and children around the globe come to faith through the Spirit of God's moving in their hearts and minds, through regeneration. This is the Great Promise of Jesus; His church will be built and He will build it.

The Spirit and the Spirit alone regenerates, reveals, and draws people to a saving relationship with Jesus, but we have a part to play. We are to live lives that are worthy of the calling we have received, we are to reveal Christ in the way we speak, the way we act, even the way we think. We are to share our faith in word and deed. God has a vision of a church that cooperates with the Holy Spirit through all of life, through preaching, through teaching and through prayer in proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The question for church leaders is how to apply this biblical mandate through their churches in their communities at this time. What will effective proclamation require in the context of our churches in our communities at this time?

The Great Commandment - Matthew 22:34-40: Jesus is asked, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" Jesus harkens back to the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18, and summarizes all the Law and the Prophets with, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," and, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." In this we find both a vertical and a horizontal dimension of love.

In my experience, churches tend to emphasize one of these dimensions over the other. In broad strokes, conservative churches tend to go more vertical while liberal churches tend to go more horizontal. Both miss the mark. The Great Commandment calls for the vertical and the horizontal. God has a vision of a church that loves Him and loves neighbor and proves both dimensions of this love in its actions, not just its words. I've never come across a church leader who dismisses the Great Commandment as unimportant, but I have come across dozens of churches and hundreds of leaders in the evangelical church that produce little to no tangible evidence of horizontal love, a love that puts neighbor as self.

Record your thoughts:

The Great Commission - Matthew 28:16-20: The Great Commission is often read or quoted as if the first word is "Go." As important as that word is, we need to back up a bit to get a running start at Go. The first of Jesus' words recorded in this text is the word, "All." Since that's where Jesus began, we should do the same.

Jesus declares that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him, and it's in this authority that the Great Commission finds its power. The authority that has come to God the Son has come from God the Father, and Jesus commissions the disciples, then and now, in that same authority, an authority that will operate in us through God the Spirit. Since we are authorized in and through that authority, we are to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This finds its full fruition in Revelation 7:9ff as the Apostle John, in his Day of the Lord vision, sees a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. Hallelujah!

To make a disciple is to become engaged in a person's life transformation from unbelieving to believing, from spiritually dead to spiritually alive, born again. That's called evangelism! Once regenerated, the new believer is to be baptized and taught to live a life of obedience to all that Jesus has commanded. Obedience is far different than knowledge, yet we tend to emphasize Christian education over Christian living in our churches.

Finally, Jesus guarantees in His Great Commission that He will be with His disciples until the end of the age. Now that's a lifetime guarantee. So, the Great Commission begins in the authority of Christ and ends in the presence of Christ, charging disciples to go in that authority and presence to make disciples, baptize, and teach obedience. Observation tells me that the typical church has watered down the power and depth of the Great Commission to teaching Bible classes, Christianity 101.

God has a vision of a church that goes in the authority of Christ, keenly aware of the presence of Christ, to make disciples, baptize them, and teach them how they are to live in obedience to Christ. The job of leaders is to apply that commission to their churches in their communities at this time.

The Great Witness - Acts 1:8: Picking up on the importance of authority, Jesus states in Acts 1:8 that the disciples will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them, and that, so empowered, they will prove to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the end of the earth. One wonders what the relationship of the end of the age in the Great Commission is to the end of the earth in Acts 1:8. Will these be simultaneous occurrences?

If we as disciples are empowered to be witnesses, why don't we see more witnessing in the American church? A witness is someone who is called to give testimony because he or she actually saw and experienced the matter or event under scrutiny. One theory, after observing the church for years, is that we fail to give good testimony because we haven't witnessed anything first hand. Most of our testimony is hearsay; third, fourth, or fifth party testimony that would be inadmissible in a court of law.

God has a vision of a church that is filled with people who are filled and empowered by His Spirit, witnessing His presence and work in their lives on a daily basis, therefore having a valid testimony to give. The job of leaders is to apply this power and experience in their churches in their communities at this time.

Record your thoughts:

The Great "Claim"

Why does Jesus make known this claim (that all authority has been given to Him)? Answer: so that when he now commissions his apostles to proclaim the gospel throughout the world, they may know that moment by moment, day by day, they can lean on him. . .

Go, a. because your Lord has so ordered; b. because he has promised to impart all the needed strength; and c. because he is worthy of the homage, faith and obedience of all men . . .

The apostle, then, must proclaim the truth and the will of God to the world. It is necessary that sinners learn about their lost condition, God, his plan of redemption, his love, his law, etc. This, however, is not enough. True discipleship implies much more. Mere mental understanding does not yet make one a disciple . . . The truth learned must be practiced. It must be appropriated by heart, mind, and will, so that one remains or abides in the truth. Only then is one truly Christ's disciple (John 8:31).

William Hendriksen, The Gospel of Matthew (NTC), pp. 998-1000.

The Great Mission – Luke 19:10: In the first nine verses of Luke 19, we see Jesus in His encounter with Zacchaeus, the man of small stature who climbed a sycamore tree to get a glimpse of Jesus. He was determined to see Jesus that day, and to his great surprise, Jesus was determined to see him. In the first verse, we learn that Jesus was passing through Jericho, stated so matter-of-factly that one could easily miss the context. Sure, Jesus was passing through, but that's because He was on His way to Jerusalem to die as payment for the penalty of sin. Passing through, indeed!

Though cataclysmic events that will affect all of mankind for all eternity are about to take place, Jesus says to this inconsequential man, "I must stay at your house today." Later in the exchange Jesus announces, "Salvation has come to his house."

Why did Jesus stop for Zacchaeus? Why bother? Why not focus on the overwhelming task at hand, being the Savior of the world? Why tarry for this despised tax collector? Jesus tells us in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." Zacchaeus was lost, so Jesus sought him out and saved him. It's as simple as that. God has a vision of a church that seeks and saves the lost, taking on the mission of Jesus as its own.

The Great Multiplication – Matthew 24:14: Where are these visionary Scriptures taking us? That destination is revealed in Matthew 24:14. For Jesus to build His church, for us to love God and love people, for us to go and make disciples of all nations, for us to be His witnesses here, there and everywhere, for us to join Jesus in His search and rescue mission, the Gospel must be proclaimed. According to Matthew 24:14, when that proclamation moves throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, then the end will come, and, with the Apostle John, we will all be part of that multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb (Revelation 7:9). An exponential multiplication will have taken place and the timeline that God has suspended inside of eternity will draw to a close. Redemptive history will be complete.

God's vision is found in the application of the Great Promise, the Great Commandment, the Great Commission, the Great Witness, the Great Mission and the Great Multiplication. The job of church leaders is to determine what these six *Greats* will look like in their churches in their communities at this time. The vision that God has for His churches is a vision of reached communities, reached through the ministry of a local church in a local community through the power of the Holy Spirit and the authority of Jesus Christ.

Record your thoughts:

5.0 - THE CONGREGATIONAL PICTURE

"The Church Has One Mission"

What exactly should the church be doing? The answer has been the same since the day Jesus spoke these words [Matthew 28:18-20 - The Great Commission]. Sure, each church will have some distinctives, and the church in different places and in different times has had some unique issues that it has needed to address. But the church has one mission. It is the mission that characterized Jesus' ministry on earth, and it is the mission that He left to the church when He returned to His Father.

Our mission on this planet is spelled out in the "Great Commission." We are called to spread Christ's rule on earth through making disciples. We share the good news of a King who conquered death, and who calls every part of His creation to submit to His benevolent reign. This is what Jesus taught His followers to pray for (Matt. 6:10) and it is the reality He calls us to work toward here on earth.

Francis Chan, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples*, pp. 268-269.

Matthew 6:10
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

The Wisdom of Teams

Proverbs 15:22 - *Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.*
Proverbs 27:17 - *Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.*

A pastor should never lead alone. With the Holy Spirit available to all there is no need for a Moses on Mt. Sinai. God knows what He wants and is willing to share that divine vision with all leaders who are called and committed to guiding their churches toward Great Commission ministry. Whether it's two by two or more by more, the biblical way is team ministry.

5.1 Establishing the Vision Team

The GO Center process for healthy, holistic vitalization or revitalization is led by a Vision Team, a small group of leaders that is selected and appointed to serve God, church and community in laying the groundwork for revitalization and moving the congregation forward.

5.1.1 Responsibilities of the Vision Team

Though all leaders in a church should be actively engaged in the vitalization process, it is the Vision Team that bears the primary responsibilities. These responsibilities include four key considerations that guide the process from beginning to end. A Vision Team of six is recommended, pastor plus five, though larger or smaller teams work as well. The congregations lead pastor should be a member of the Vision Team and in most cases should lead the team. As a rule, revitalization that is transformative requires a major shift in ministry culture, a shift that is reflective across the boards in all ministry areas. The lead pastor must be fully engaged in the catalytic leadership that will model this culture with its Great Commission commitments and that will champion the paradigm shifts that will be needed. The lack of the lead pastor's wholehearted and highly visible engagement sends a

negative message that, despite the Vision Team's rhetoric, the revitalization campaign is not truly significant.

Specific responsibilities of the Vision Team include:

Discerning God's Vision for the Church: Vision is a function of discernment, not creativity. The process centers that discernment on the Great Commission. Using GO Center tools, principles and concepts, the Vision Team seeks God's leading in discerning His vision for the individual church. This involves prayer, Bible study, personal and team reflection and discussion, and investigative research into the demography of both congregation and community. Under the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit, the members of the Vision Team seek to know God, to know the congregation and to know the community as they discern how God desires to express Himself through their church's commitment to the Great Commission.

Developing Vision & Strategy: Having committed to the Great Commission, the Vision Team uses the training content of the process to develop that vision into a cogent strategy. Vision answers the frontline questions "What" and "Why." What are we trying to accomplish and why is that our objective? Strategy answers the question "How." How are we going to fulfill the vision? The Vision Team paints the broad strokes of strategy and then equips and empowers leaders of particular ministry areas to develop and deploy the tactical initiatives.

Directing the Church through the Process: The Vision Team directs all others through the process. This includes staff and leaders not serving on the team, church members, regular attendees and even newcomers that might come into the church during the vitalization effort. The Vision Team is more fully engaged in the process than all others, and therefore must determine the course and set the pace. The work of the team is a holistic undertaking, not a priming of the pump or simply a launch. The team stays the course until vitalization has firmly taken hold, usually a process that builds over 18-24 months of intentional and consistent effort.

Determining Evaluation & Accountability: One of the underlying causes of plateau and decline in the church is the failure of church leaders to hold themselves and the ministries of the church accountable to ministry effectiveness. So often, the hosting of events and activities is seen as the objective, and as long as these events and activities take place, leaders view themselves as having met the objective. But hosting is not the issue. The issue is ministry effectiveness, ministry results, ministry outcomes. The Vision Team holds every element of vitalization accountable for being effective in the producing of intentional ministry results and determines the means by which effectiveness and results are evaluated.

5.1.2 Characteristics of the Vision Team

The Vision Team must collectively reflect four distinct characteristics. These characteristics need not be strongly evident in each Vision Team member, but must be strongly evident in the team as a group.

The Vision Team Must Be Discerning: It stands to reason that if vision is a function of discernment, the Vision Team must be discerning. The Vision Team must have the giftedness and patience to seek God and apply the Great Commission. Evidence of discernment in the lives of Vision Team members should be plainly visible prior to their selection to serve on the team. Potential is not enough, but there must be a history of trustworthy discernment that bears witness to this characteristic.

The Vision Team Must Be Visionary: Though the focal point of discovering God's vision is the Great Commission, the Vision Team needs to be visionary in the sense that the team is able to look into the future and clearly see the Great Commission as it is applied in the life of the church. The Vision Team must have a clear understanding of what the ministry future should look like and the capacity to cast that vision so that others can see the future that God desires as well.

The Vision Team Must Be Spiritually Mature: Discernment of God's vision and leading a congregation to pursue that vision are to be guided by a team that is spiritually mature. These are high stakes. God's vision for the church is at stake, the future of the congregation's ministry is at stake, and the reaching of men, women and children with the person, love and ministry of Jesus Christ is at stake. Therefore, the Vision Team must be spiritually mature. The temptation is to load the Vision Team with people who have proven to be entrepreneurial and/or highly successful in their professional lives, but the Vision Team is to be measured by spiritual and not secular standards.

The Vision Team Must Be Well-Respected: The Vision Team is very likely to bring issues to the congregation that are challenging and that require change. Congregations are typically negative in their attitudes towards change, so it is important that those bringing the Great Commission message be endowed with great credibility. This respect must already be in place at the start of the vitalization process. The process does not lend itself to the development of respect. Rather, respect is a prerequisite to Vision Team selection.

FAQs in Vision Team Selection:

How many should be on the Vision Team? On average, six is a good number of members to have on the Vision Team – pastor plus five. The number might vary according to the size of the congregation. A small church with a limited number of qualified leaders might go with pastor plus two or three if necessary. Though a congregation might be large in number, it's recommended that the Vision Team not go far past six.

There is certainly nothing magical about having six, but six provides enough people for varied input without the team's being so large that seeking input from everyone becomes overly time consuming, and having too many voices at the table breeds confusion rather than focus. Also, six provides for a critical mass of leaders on those occasions when a team member has to miss a meeting.

It's important that the lead pastor serve on the Vision Team. Congregants are going to be asked to work through change and alter the DNA of the church, significant challenges. If the lead pastor is not in the center of the effort, congregants will view the initiative as unimportant and will likely not commit to doing what's necessary.

Who should select the Vision Team? There should be a cooperative effort between pastoral staff, elders and/or deacons, and other key leaders that are deemed to be significant in the selection process. This team will be responsible for leading the church through the Great Commission vitality process and will need to be both qualified and, in particular, trusted.

Should the Session or Elder Board serve as the Vision Team? The recommendation is "no." Serving on the Vision Team is a serious commitment and if the leading governing and direction-setting group in the church is fulfilling its responsibilities, adding service on the Vision Team will create overload. That said, the relationship between the Vision Team and the Session or Elder Board must be very strong with great communication passing between them, so it would be a good idea to have the Session or Elder Board represented on the Vision Team as a liaison.

Should the Vision Team be a "representative" group? The recommendation is "no." The goal is not to be democratic or to reach consensus or to have a leader from each ministry lobby for the interests of that ministry. The goal is to set direction and lead – to bring the Great Commission to the forefront of ministry both spiritually and strategically. Members should be selected according to the criteria regarding responsibilities and characteristics already covered in the previous pages.

How often should the Vision Team meet? It's recommended that the Vision Team meet twice a month. This is often enough to keep things fresh in the minds of team members so that progress can be made at each meeting rather than getting bogged down in review of past meetings. Shorter, more frequent meetings tend to produce better results than longer meetings that are spread out with a month or more in between.

How long should the Vision Team serve? The initial commitment should be approximately two years. That should give ample time for vitalization to take hold and begin bearing measurable fruit. Beyond that there are two considerations. First, if the Session or Elder Board has re-structured and de-structured away from administration and finance and moved to a leadership model that is focused on spiritual leadership with strategic resourcing (Acts 6:1-7), then it might make sense for these leaders to assume the ongoing role of the Vision Team. Second, if the Vision Team needs to continue to serve, members who have the need to step down and be replaced by others should do so.

NOTE: This process is not an exact science, so the answers to these often-asked questions need to be understood as recommendations and not as hard and fast rules. Ultimately, the process must serve the ministry; ministry should never be asked to serve the process.

Unified Leadership

One of the great beauties of a truly healthy and unified leadership team is that it experiences unity in the healthiest sense of the word . . . When a battle of competing ideas is over, they [team members] march out and present a unified front, setting aside their personal preferences and agendas in light of the greater good and the bigger mission.

Larry Osborne, *Sticky Teams*, p. 20.

Five Dysfunctions of a Team

1. Absence of Trust
2. Fear of Conflict
3. Lack of Commitment
4. Avoidance of Accountability
5. Inattention to Results

Patrick Lencioni
The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, pp. 188-189

5.2 Vision Team Selection Tool (permission to photocopy)

Candidate: _____

| | Poor | Satisfactory | Good | Excellent |
|------------|------|--------------|------|-----------|
| Discerning | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Visionary | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Mature | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Respected | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Candidate: _____

| | Poor | Satisfactory | Good | Excellent |
|------------|------|--------------|------|-----------|
| Discerning | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Visionary | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Mature | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Respected | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Candidate: _____

| | Poor | Satisfactory | Good | Excellent |
|------------|------|--------------|------|-----------|
| Discerning | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Visionary | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Mature | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Respected | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Candidate: _____

| | Poor | Satisfactory | Good | Excellent |
|------------|------|--------------|------|-----------|
| Discerning | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Visionary | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Mature | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Respected | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Candidate: _____

| | Poor | Satisfactory | Good | Excellent |
|------------|------|--------------|------|-----------|
| Discerning | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Visionary | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Mature | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Respected | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Figure 4

Reason 12: Blurred Vision

Without a vision, the people perish.

Proverbs 29:18 KJV

King James warns that without vision the people perish (Proverbs 29:18 KJV). Small wonder the American church languishes in plateau and decline, as authentic godly vision in the American church is in very short supply. Observation has led me to conclude that most American churches approach vision from one of five blurry perspectives. **Accidental Vision** is vision that results from the collision of the history of a church and its current status quo. The relationship between leadership choices and the path of history takes an ironic turn as past choices that determined the history of a church evolve into being a history that determines the present choices of a church, guiding that church to a status quo that is more historic than visionary, and the people perish.

Vanilla Vision is vision with no distinct flavor. The vision of the church is largely a default vision with no reached community as its focus. This bland vision is the homogenization of typical visions of typical churches led by typical pastors and typical leaders in typical ministry settings. It's a one-size-fits-all treatment of vision that reflects no unique calling or identity, and the people perish.

Madison Avenue Vision reduces vision to the marketing of a church over the setting of direction for the church. The focus is on the language of vision that will be used to present the church publicly. This takes the form of cleverly articulated vision statements or pithy slogans that might be printed across the bottom of the Sunday bulletin, on banners, or on the home page of a website. These catchy phrases sound interesting and make for an inspirational backdrop to a Friday Night Vision Banquet, but they are largely just lip service. There is little to no connection between these vision *jingles* and actual ministry, and the people perish.

Grand Theft Vision makes felons of church leaders as they *steal* vision from other churches. Unable or unwilling to discern God's vision for their churches, or perhaps unaware of this responsibility or possibility, they latch onto the exciting vision that God has birthed in some other church, using it as if it were their own. These pilfered visions are found in Christian magazines or best-selling books, through colleagues, or at seminars and conferences. This is grand theft, not petty theft, because the only visions that are talked and written about prove to be, well, grand. And, again, the people perish.

Praise God for explosive churches that, by His grace, take dynamic visions to spectacular heights for the cause of Christ, but let's keep their stories in perspective. When we hear of how God is using a particular church with a unique vision in a special way, we should not think methodology, but testimony. Learn and grow from these accounts, and be inspired, but don't covet your neighbor's vision and attempt to steal it. Do your discernment homework and God will bless your church with His unique vision for you.

Finally, there is **Ego Vision**, a type of vision that is more about empire building than kingdom building. There are creative and visionary pastors and leaders that launch new vision *knowing* that their church might soon become the Church-du-Jour, featured in leading Christian magazines, talked about at seminars and conferences, and copied by other churches across the nation. Theirs will not simply be a church with vision, but a church with a model, a template of the latest and greatest that Christianity has to offer. To them, the kingdom of God resides at their address and they expect pilgrims to come from miles and miles to find the true meaning of ministry life. And the people perish.

Godly vision is more about discernment than creativity. It's not an exercise in taking a blank canvas and painting a vision that's never been seen before. It's the study of God's canvas, the Scriptures, and discerning how to apply His vision for *the* church in the context of *our* churches in *our* communities. When considering God's vision, it's clear that His eye is focused on seeking and saving the lost. But, though His vision is clear, vision in many churches remains blurred as we continue to keep the Good News to ourselves.

(excerpt from *The Silent Church: 39 Reasons We Keep the Good News to Ourselves* by Ken Priddy)

5.3 Establishing Prayer Teams

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³ And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴ All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. Acts 1:12-14

Prayer Teams are the heart of the GO Process, providing support for both the spiritual and the strategic elements of revitalization. Each member of the Vision Team forms a Prayer Team of four to eight people. Prayer Teams meet regularly and Prayer Team members are in contact with each other between meetings.

5.3.1 Responsibilities of Prayer Teams:

Prayer Teams Pray: The primary responsibility of the Prayer Team is to, well, pray! Pray for the work of the Vision Team. Pray for the Great Commission to be clearly and effectively applied. Pray for the well-being of Vision Team members and their families. Pray. Pray. Pray. The Prayer Teams provide a layer of prayer support that guides and protects the ministry of the Vision Team.

Prayer Teams Communicate: Prayer Teams also have a communications responsibility. When Vision Team members meet with their Prayer Teams, the primary activity is prayer, but the Prayer Team also serves as a vehicle for two-way communication. The Vision Team member is able to share what's going on inside Vision Team meetings with the Prayer Team; e.g. what issues are being discussed, what questions are being answered, what actions are being taken, what challenges are being faced. The Prayer Team becomes informed and prays. Also, Prayer Team members share insights and perspectives with the Vision Team member, and that input makes it back to the Vision Team for consideration. In this way, the Vision Team has the benefit of much prayer support, and the community of people in the church who are informed about Vision Team developments is widened. Also, the work of the Vision Team is witnessed by all those who serve on Prayer Teams, bringing the work of the Vision Team out from behind closed doors.

Prayer Teams Meet Spiritual Resistance: We know from Scripture that our battle is not against flesh and blood but is against "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places," (Ephesians 6:12). We need not fear these forces because "he who is in [us] is greater than he who is in the world," (1 John 4:4). However, make no mistake; he is in the world. Whenever a church raises its head by committing to greater emphasis on reaching a lost community, our enemy takes notice and counters with resistance and attacks. Since the Vision Team is serving as the point of the revitalization spear, Vision Team members are likely to be in the center of that spiritual battle. Prayer Teams are there to support, protect and encourage the Vision Team as it undertakes its mission.

The potential of our prayers together is as limitless as God's power to answer them. In every century, moments spent before Him are rewarded and blessed . . . God uses the teamwork of prayer to accomplish things that wouldn't happen by any other means. God has sovereignly elected to move through our prayers together. That's why one of the first things Jesus taught His disciples to pray for was that His kingdom would come (Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2). William Wilberforce, who with a group of evangelical Christians (known as the Clapham Circle) successfully prayed and strategized for the abolition of slavery from the British Empire, eloquently expressed our deep need to call on God: "But all may be done through prayer - almighty prayer, I am ready to say - and why not? For that it is almighty is only through the gracious ordination of the God of love and truth. O then, pray, pray, pray . . ."

James Banks, *The Lost Art of Praying Together*, pp. 94-95.

5.3.2 The Prayer Team Network

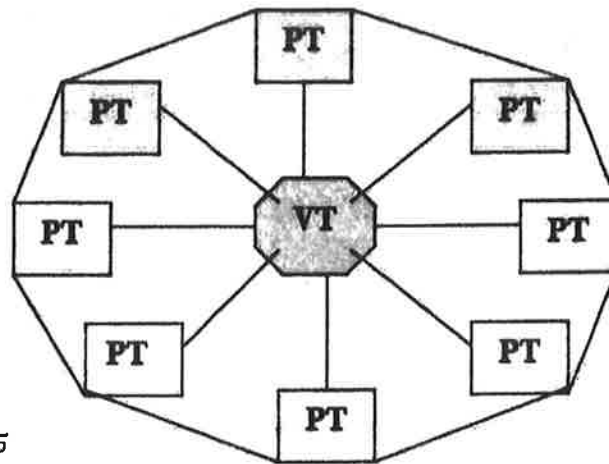


Figure 5

The figure above graphically portrays the network that develops when Prayer Teams are formed. In looking at this example, a Vision Team of eight forms eight Prayer Teams. If the Prayer Teams average five members not including the Vision Team member, then there are forty-eight people intimately involved with the *GO Process*, eight Vision Team members plus forty (eight times five) additional Prayer Team members. Many churches embracing the *GO Process* are small and forty-eight people represent a fairly large percentage of the congregation.

Philippians 4:4-9 - ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Ephesians 6:10-20 - ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Psalm 5:1-8

¹Give ear to my words, O LORD;
consider my groaning.

²Give attention to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God,
for to you do I pray.

³O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;
in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.

⁴For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
evil may not dwell with you.

⁵The boastful shall not stand before your eyes;
you hate all evildoers.

⁶You destroy those who speak lies;
the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

⁷But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love,
will enter your house.

I will bow down toward your holy temple
in the fear of you.

⁸Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness
because of my enemies;
make your way straight before me.

Matthew 9:35-38

³⁵ And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

5.4 Prayer Team Selection Tool (permission to photocopy)

List potential candidates for serving on Prayer Teams (PTs). Group them according to likely affinities that suggest effectiveness in this role.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Vision Team Member:</p> <hr/> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> | <p>Vision Team Member:</p> <hr/> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> |
| <p>Vision Team Member:</p> <hr/> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> | <p>Vision Team Member:</p> <hr/> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> |
| <p>Vision Team Member:</p> <hr/> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> | <p>Vision Team Member:</p> <hr/> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> <p>PT _____</p> |

Figure 6

6.0 - THE CHURCH LIFECYCLE

6.1 Three Macro-Stages

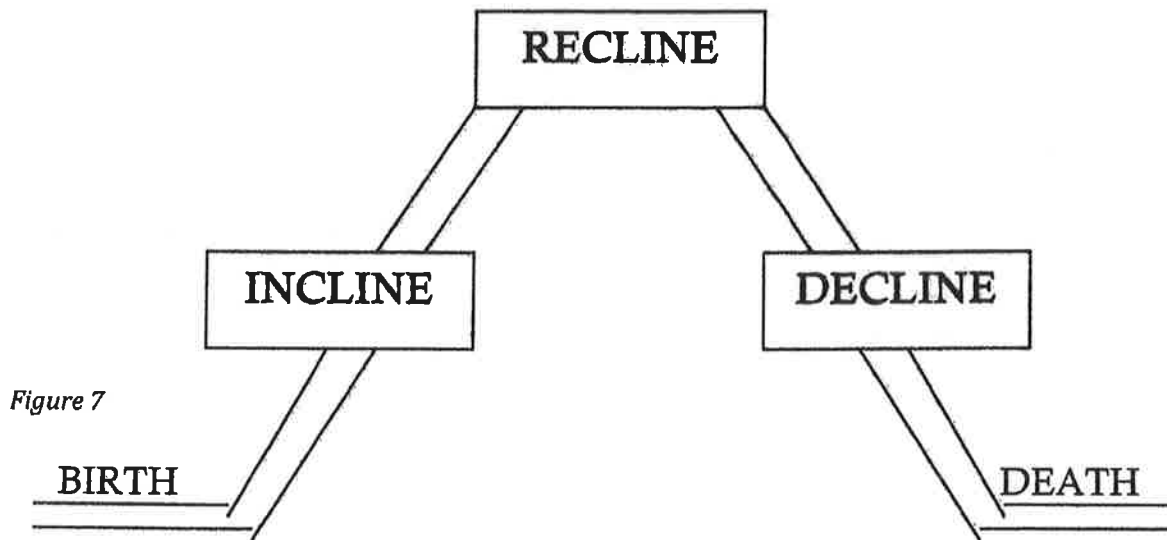


Figure 7

The Church Lifecycle can be considered in three primary macro-stages.

Incline is the stage of church lifecycle when the ministry capacity of the church is increasing. Over time, the church is doing more and more ministry and the quality of that ministry is better and better. Incline is a strong stage featuring health, growth and multiplication.

Recline is the stage of church lifecycle when the ministry capacity of the church levels off into plateau. Over time, the church is doing the same ministry over and over at more or less the same levels of quality. Recline is a tepid, tread water stage featuring ministry management by routine, filling in the blanks.

Decline is the stage of church lifecycle when the ministry capacity of the church is decreasing. Over time, the church is doing less and less ministry and the quality of that ministry is more and more compromised. Decline is a weak stage featuring decreases in membership, attendance, giving and overall impact in the community.

The Lifecycle Story:
Vitality LOST Over Time
Arnold C. Cook
Historical Drift: Must My Church Die?

Figure 8

Vitalization Principle:
Change ranges from
MODERATE to SEVERE
depending on the lifecycle stage.

Figure 9

The typical lifecycle story is one of vitality lost over time. The objective of vitalization is to intervene into the lifecycle and reverse the trend such that vitality is gained over time. A key vitalization principle is that church vitalization ranges from moderate to severe depending on the lifecycle stage. Churches on the upside of the lifecycle, Incline and early Recline, are facing moderate vitalization, while churches on the downside of the lifecycle, fully developed Recline and Decline, are facing a much more severe vitalization treatment.

The Catch-22, then, is that churches that are facing the most severe treatment concerning vitalization are at their weakest in terms of vitality, as illustrated by *Figure 10*. Therefore, it is much better for churches to embrace vitalization early in the lifecycle rather than late, as vitalization is much more accessible from a position of strength than from a position of weakness, especially when a moderate vitalization treatment is appropriate. So why don't churches turn to vitalization sooner rather than later? It's because church leaders are reluctant to tamper with ministry that's working, choosing to rest on their laurels rather than fix what's not broken. However, preemptive vitalization makes the most sense and creates the greatest ministry impact.

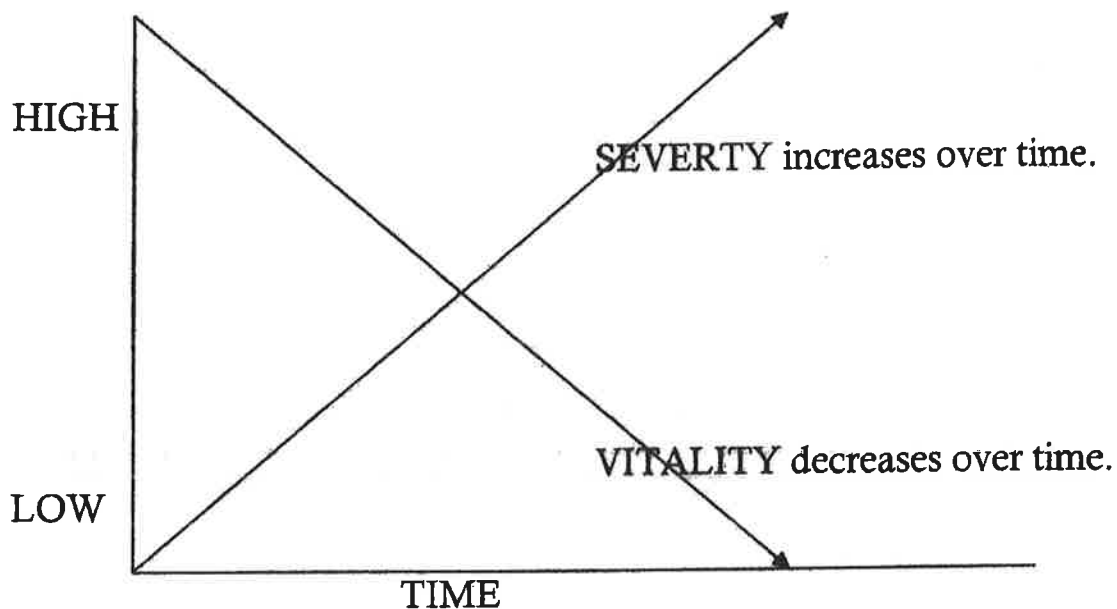


Figure 10

If the prime organization does not refuel its momentum, if they lose entrepreneurship, if they keep capitalizing on the momentum rather than nourishing it, they will lose the rate of growth and eventually the organizational vitality will level off.

Arnold L. Cook – *Historical Drift: Must My Church Die* p. 72.

6.2 10 Distinctive Characteristics of Incline, Recline & Decline

In considering Incline, Recline and Decline, it's helpful to note certain distinctive characteristics that separate them.

1. Orientation

Inclining churches are **Future-Oriented**. Inclining leaders are always looking ahead, making decisions today based on their implications for tomorrow. Leaders of Inclining churches would never trade what is best for the future for what seems best for the present. There is a sense of destination and all energy, resources and focus are fixed on reaching that destination.

Reclining churches are **Present-Oriented**. Reclining leaders are quite satisfied with how things are and if they could they would freeze time, preferring an eternal present where all Sundays would be just like *this* Sunday, characterized by a solid congregation with solid finances, good staff, good programs, and nice facilities.

Declining churches are **Past-Oriented**. Declining leaders desire to go back to some former time in the church, perhaps when Rev. So-and-So was here. Decline has a point of reference, a point from which things declined. So, the natural tendency is to want to return to the way it used to be, a time that is perceived as better and a time that is sugar coated with nostalgia.

Question: Is your church more: Future-Oriented []
 Present-Oriented []
 Past-Oriented []

2. Drive

Inclining churches are **Vision-Driven**. Inclining leaders have discerned God's vision for their churches and are fully committed to that vision. All decisions are made in light of and for the benefit of that vision. The rightly discerned godly vision is the point of reference from which all else flows.

Reclining churches are **Program-Driven**. Reclining leaders are convinced that the success of their churches lies in the strength of the programming. All decisions are made in light of and for the benefit of the programming. The programming is the point of reference from which all else flows.

Declining churches are **Structure-Driven**. Declining churches are living in a church world that is devoid of vision and devoid of effective programming. In light of this void, these leaders cling to the structure of the church as evidence that the church is still alive. They are preoccupied with elements such as organizational charts, boards and committees, finances, payroll, building maintenance, etc.

Question: Is your church more: Vision-Driven []
 Program-Driven []
 Structure-Driven []

3. Focus

Inclining churches are **Community-Focused**. Inclining leaders give priority to the group of people that is living in the community, as yet unreached by the church. These community residents are the objects to key Scripture passages such as the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Who are the neighbors in the Great Commandment to love your neighbor as yourself? They are the people of the community. When the Great Commission commands us to go and make disciples, to whom are we to take the gospel? We are to take the gospel to the people of the community.

Reclining churches are **Congregation-Focused**. Reclining leaders give priority to the group of people that is inside the church, those already reached. Surely, a healthy church will focus on both community and congregation, but the natural inclination for leaders is to focus on the congregation at the expense of the community. Inreach has its own voice, but outreach needs an advocate.

Otherwise the focus will be so heavily weighted toward the congregation that the community will be ignored. The church that fails to reach its community ultimately finds itself on the backside of the lifecycle.

Declining churches are **Core-Focused**. Declining leaders focus on a remnant of the declining church whose influence becomes stronger as the church grows smaller. Key influencers in this core often prove to be barriers to growth as they remain entrenched in their authority and hold the congregation hostage by means of that authority and influence. One key element that is leveraged in this way is money. Often the influencers in the core give significant percentages of the church's budget. Others in the core believe that the church couldn't sustain without that income, so they acquiesce to the influencer's demands.

Question: Is your church more: Community-Focused []
 Congregation-Focused []
 Core-Focused []

4. Attitude

Inclining churches are **Innovative** in their approach to ministry. They keep abreast of new ideas and developments and thrive on making good ministry better through creativity and experimentation. Inclining leaders will adjust, modify and even replace ministries, programs or systems that are working well if they determine that something new would bring greater benefit. Constantly being in research and development mode and putting new prototypes on the field is labor intensive, but Inclining leaders are willing to pay that price.

Reclining churches are **Routine** in their approach to ministry. If the machinery of ministry is working, don't mess with it. This approach might best be described as fill-in-the-blanks ministry. Make sure people, curriculum, programming and the like are in place and let the system run. Templates are developed as much as possible for standardization, such as a Sunday morning bulletin template that gets filled in by ministry leaders with song titles, sermon title and text, announcements, etc. Often in this environment, leaders of different ministries or departments rarely communicate but simply make sure the blanks for which they are responsible are filled.

Declining churches are **Complacent** in their approach to ministry. It's not that Declining leaders don't care, it's that they are resigned to the belief that they cannot make the future happen, but can only wait and let it happen. In a sense, they see themselves as victims of circumstances and consequently hope that these external circumstances will change so that they will be less victimized. This is a passive posture that incubates in the wishful thinking that somehow God will do something to better their plight. They believe that God does great things through His church, but struggle to believe that He would do something great in theirs.

Question: Is your church more: Innovative []
 Routine []
 Complacent []

5. Faith

Inclining churches exercise **High-Risk Faith**. Inclining leaders are committed to following God wherever He leads without contingency. As such, no risk is too high when God's leading is ascertained. Given this proclivity, much time and energy are invested in pursuit of God's leading with an expectation that God will in fact guide these leaders on their journey of faithfulness, a faith journey that is willing to risk all but that faith.

Reclining churches exercise **Low-Risk Faith**. Reclining leaders are surely committed to following God, but are also committed to guarding resources and all that has been accomplished carefully.

These leaders are willing to try new ideas, but in a controlled environment where not much is at stake if the new endeavor fails.

Declining churches exercise **No-Risk Faith**. Declining leaders are committed to protecting whatever limited resources remain and therefore will not put those resources at risk. They see this as prudent, as stretching resources out as long as possible in the hope that God will make some unanticipated move at some point and make ministry better, as if the state of their ministry is God's fault.

Question: Does your church exercise: High-Risk Faith []
 Low-Risk Faith []
 No-Risk Faith []

6. Decisions

Given its High-Risk Faith, Inclining churches make **Faith Decisions**. Inclining leaders will move forward in faith despite the fact that things might not add up on paper, despite the fact that not all of the needed resources might currently be available, and despite the fact that the outcome is uncertain and there might be much at risk. This is predicated, of course, on the belief that a godly vision has been rightly discerned and that God's leading is clear, compelling leaders to act decisively though there might be holes in the initiative.

Given its Low-Risk Faith, Reclining churches make **Resource Decisions**. Reclining leaders will move forward only when all of the necessary resources are on hand or anticipated, and when those resources need not be diverted from current programming. They see this as wise and prudent and in keeping with counting the cost before undertaking a new initiative.

Given its No-Risk Faith, Declining churches are paralyzed by **Indecision**. Declining leaders are fearful of making mistakes and falling further into Decline, so they hesitate in making decisions or fail to make decisions altogether. Ironically the decision not to make a decision *is* a decision, usually a wrong decision.

Question: Does your church make: Faith-Decisions []
 Resource Decisions []
 or is it stuck in: Indecision []

7. Servanthood

Inclining churches place people in serving positions by identifying their **Gifts**. Inclining leaders understand that people are most productive and most fulfilled when they are serving in their areas of giftedness, talent, passion, experience and calling. Care is taken to deploy people in ministry accordingly in order that they are utilized to their full potential in a manner that is sustainable over long periods of time. When people are integrated into service through this approach, they understand that they are serving as a privilege, not as an obligation or as a means of simply helping out.

Reclining churches place people in serving positions through **Slot-Filling**. An inventory is taken to determine how many slots need to be filled to man each program. The congregation is then grabbed by the collar and dragged through the grid of these slots in the hope that a live body will land in each slot. Once this is done, the nominating committee reasons that its work is done since each program has proper coverage. Though all slots might be filled, this approach is not fulfilling for those involved and leads to burnout and ineffective ministry as people are not matched properly to service.

Declining churches place people in serving positions by **Default**. There are typically more slots to be filled than there are people, so those remaining in the church are likely to fill a slot because "somebody has to do it." Usually those willing to serve commit to serving in multiple slots, wearing so many hats that they are spread too thin to be effective.

Question: Does your church place people in ministry more by:

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Gifts | [] |
| Slot-Filling | [] |
| Default | [] |

8. Finances

Inclining churches approach money like an **Investor**. Inclining leaders regard the funding that God has provided as money intended to produce the fruit of ministry, so they invest that money in ministry with the expectation that ministry fruit will result, thirty-fold, sixty-fold, a hundred-fold.

Reclining churches approach money as a **Provider**. Reclining leaders are driven by the church's programming and see money as the financial provision to keep those programs running. The focus is on hosting program activities rather than on the fruit of ministry that might be produced.

Declining churches approach money as a **Preserver**. Declining leaders see the church's money as the financial means of the church's survival. The focus is on stretching the church's ability to stay alive as long as possible in the hope that God might unexpectedly move at some point to create more viable ministry that recaptures the past.

Question: Does your church approach money and resources more as an:

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| Investor | [] |
| Provider | [] |
| Preserver | [] |

9. Leadership

Inclining churches are always seeking the development of **New Leadership**. Inclining leaders understand that for the church to continue to grow there is always the need for new leaders to move into existing and newly created ministries. This commitment to new leadership is reflected in aggressive discipling toward leadership and the sending out of existing leaders to create new ministry and open doors for new leadership. New Leadership is foundational to expanding ministry capacity.

Reclining churches are led by **Established Leadership**. With programming reaching capacity and leveling off, the leadership positions have been identified and filled, leaving little room for the emergence of new leadership. Those who come into such a ministry with leadership giftedness and potential are unable to realize that giftedness and potential, so their growth is stunted or they migrate elsewhere to apply their leadership calling.

Declining churches are led by **Incumbent Leadership**. Declining leaders have often been in place for long stretches of time, perhaps even serving for decades in the same leadership position. Routine prevails as the same kinds of decisions are made the same way based on the same criteria with little change or progress being seen. The prevailing attitude is to do things the way we always have in the hope of a better result. At best, this is wishful thinking.

Question: Is your church's leadership creating:

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| New Leadership | [] |
| Established Leadership | [] |
| Incumbent Leadership | [] |

or is it more vested in:

How many checks were placed on Inclining characteristics? _____

How many checks were placed on Reclining characteristics? _____

How many checks were placed on Declining characteristics? _____

Based on this simple analysis, where is your church on the lifecycle?

My church is on the Incline. _____

My church is on the Recline. _____

My church is on the Decline. _____

Does your church show evidence of vitality-lost over time? Please explain.

Will your church's vitalization be moderate, severe, or somewhere in between?
Please explain.

Reminder: The Importance of Ministry Capacity

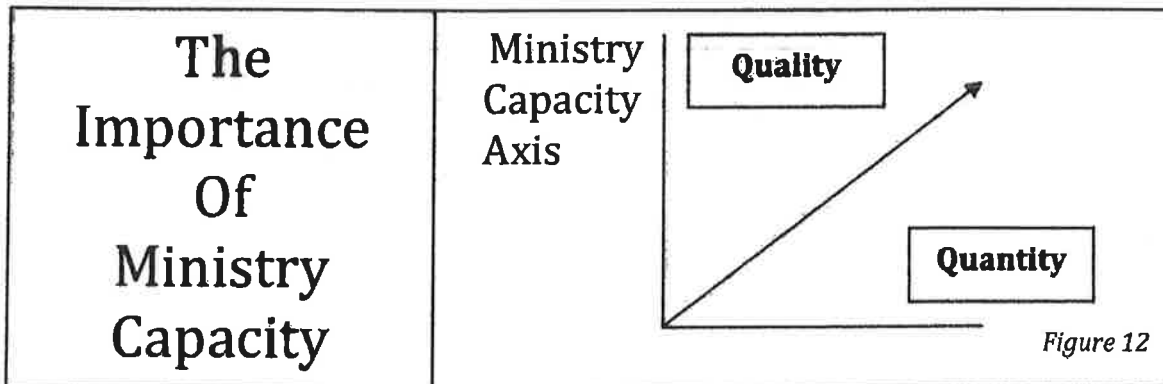
You will recall that the first comments made regarding Lifecycle concerned the ministry capacity of Incline, Recline and Decline. During Incline, ministry capacity increases; during Recline, ministry capacity levels off or plateaus; during Decline, ministry capacity decreases. Ministry capacity refers to both the quality and quantity of ministry conducted over time.

As a church moves through Incline, its ministry capacity increases, conducting more and more ministry better and better over time. But ministry capacity ceases to increase when a significant resource is maxed out. Unless more of that resource is acquired, the church will lapse into Recline.

As a church moves through Recline, quality and quantity level off. Quantity levels off at a given point when a resource is fully maxed. For example, when all the seats are taken attendance levels off, when all the funds are allocated, nothing more can be spent, or when staff time and energy are fully engaged, nothing more can be drawn from staff. Quality levels off at a level that is less than full capacity. Conducting ministry at its highest quality levels requires tremendous time and effort. Those who are serving and leading tend to tire of giving the time and energy necessary for full quality capacity and begin to compromise as an inreach mentality reaches full bloom.

This full blooming of inreach causes church insiders to think only of themselves and not newcomers. Rather than prepare for the possibility of "company" coming to the church, they prepare only for the church "family," reasoning that all the time and trouble to be the best that they can be is really not needed for family. If this mentality is allowed to prevail over time, their prediction will manifest and no company will be coming. Once that happens, the natural attrition of insiders moving away, passing away or simply going away goes unchecked as no newcomers are coming into the church to replace those who are leaving, not to mention the failure to reach the lost through outreach and evangelism.

By the time the church moves into Decline, drop in quality and quantity is at full steam and continues until only the core and its limited resources remain. Occasionally a core is actually well off financially due to endowments and the like, but those resources are held for self-preservation and therefore provide no impetus for increased ministry capacity.



*Historical drift is the inherent tendency of human organizations to depart over time from their original beliefs, purposes and practices, which in the Christian context results in the loss of spiritual vitality (p. 10) ... Time is a great healer and a great eroder. It dilutes commitment, blurs vision, undermines values and destroys virtues. The darker side of generational theory would remind us that in questionable ethical issues what one generation rejects the second one tolerates and the third one embraces ... At every level of Christian living and ministry, time takes its toll. Complacency gradually replaces commitment. The desire to be served subtly displaces the desire to serve. Monetary motivation slowly takes priority over ministry. Wants evolve into needs. And, through it all, historical drift becomes the winner (p. 57). Arnold L. Cook, *Historical Drift - Must My Church Die: How to Detect, Diagnose and Reverse the Trends**

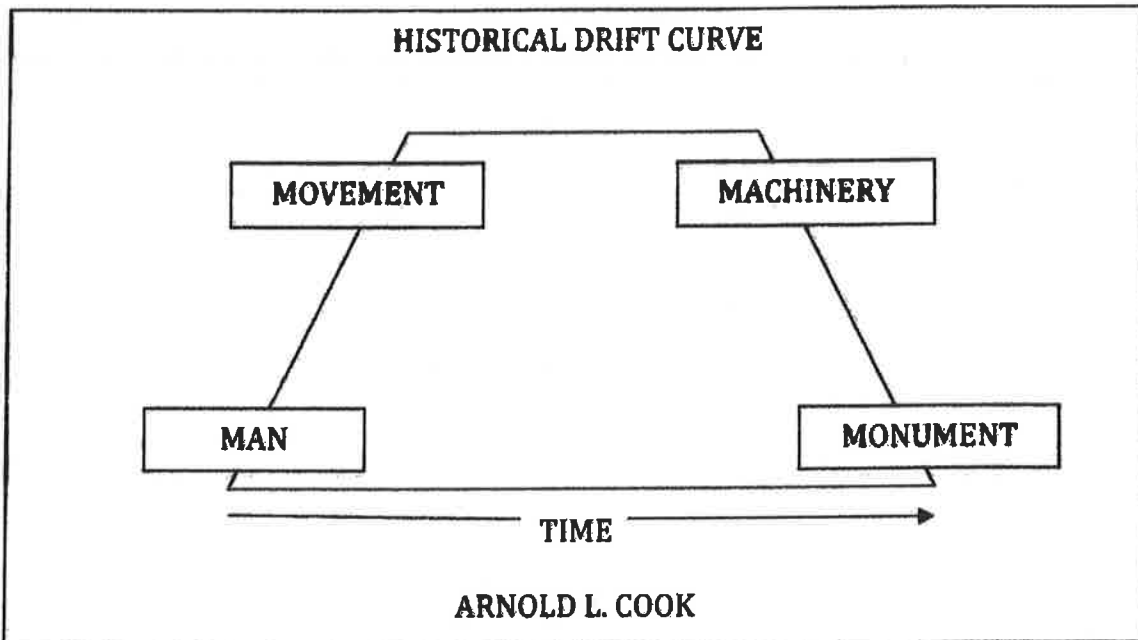


Figure 13

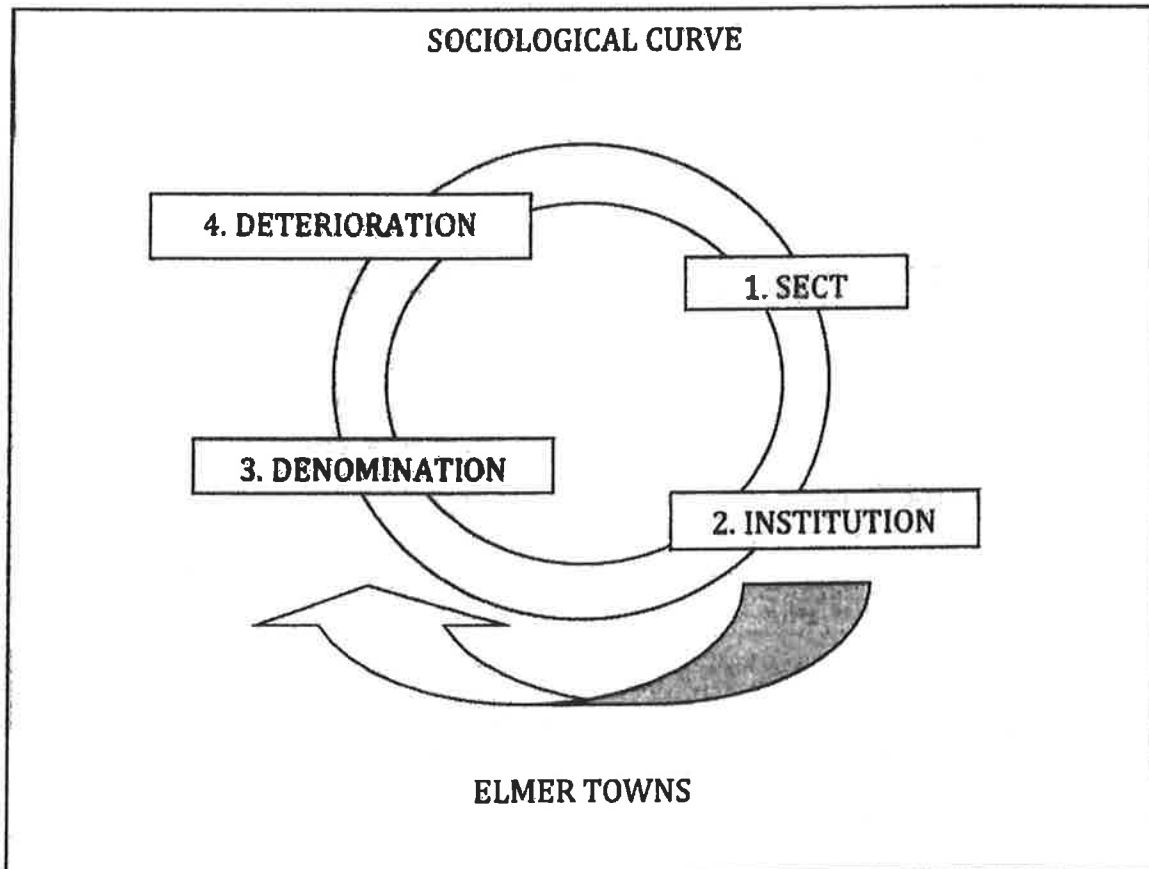


Figure 14

6.3 A Closer Look at the Church Lifecycle: Six Micro-Stages

When church leaders first encounter the Distinctive Characteristics of Incline, Recline and Decline, they tend to see their churches as clearly in one or the other of these three stages. However, on second thought, many begin to wonder if their church is perhaps somewhere in between Incline and Recline or Recline and Decline. It very well may be that their instincts are correct and that their church's ministry is a blend of two lifecycle stages.

Incline, Recline and Decline can each be divided into two sub-stages that delineate a stage that is *emerging* from a stage that is *developed*. This delineation sub-divides the lifecycle into six sub-stages: Emerging Incline and Developed Incline, Emerging Recline and Developed Recline, Emerging Decline and Developed Decline (see *Figure 15*).

As the church moves left to right along the lifecycle, Emerging Incline will become Developed Incline as Reclining characteristics begin to manifest. Emerging Recline is entered when Reclining characteristics begin to hold more force than fading Inclining characteristics. Developed Recline, the first sub-stage on the downside of the lifecycle, takes over as Inclining characteristics disappear altogether and the first hint of Declining characteristics begins to surface behind dominant Reclining characteristics. Emerging Decline is seen when these Declining characteristics gain dominance over Reclining characteristics, and Developed Decline, near the end of the lifecycle, holds sway as all traces of Reclining characteristics fade, leaving a pure form of Decline in place.

Though all Distinctive Characteristics could be utilized in describing the movement of a church through the six sub-stages of the lifecycle, I am choosing to concentrate on four of the ten characteristics presented earlier for the sake of clarity and emphasis: 1. Orientation, 2. Drive, 3. Focus, and 4. Growth.

Emerging Incline: As a church plant or church vitalization effort launches, the appropriate launch point is Emerging Incline. This is Incline in its purest form and positions the church as Future-Oriented, Vision-Driven, and Community-Focused resulting in Conversion Growth.

Developed Incline: Emerging Incline gives way to Developed Incline as Reclining characteristics begin to appear. Though the ministry remains primarily Future-Oriented, it becomes secondarily Present-Oriented. Though the ministry remains primarily Vision-Driven, it becomes secondarily Program-Driven. Though the ministry remains Community-Focused, it becomes secondarily Congregation-Focused. During this stage there is still significant Conversion Growth, but Transfer Growth is beginning to increase. This is the healthiest and most productive season of the lifecycle.

Emerging Recline: Developed Incline gives way to Emerging Recline as the primary and secondary characteristics of Developed Incline switch positions. The ministry becomes primarily Present-Oriented and secondarily Future-Oriented, it becomes primarily Program-Driven and secondarily Vision-Driven, and it becomes primarily Congregation-Focused and secondarily Community-Focused. The church continues to grow, but there is an increase in Transfer-Growth and a decrease in Conversion-Growth. A serious line is crossed when entering Emerging Recline that places congregation over community, setting the church on an inevitable course for Decline unless there is intentional intervention.

Developed Recline: Emerging Recline gives way to Developed Recline as two distinct shifts take place. First, the characteristics of Incline disappear, and second, the characteristics of Decline begin to surface. The ministry remains primarily Present-Oriented but is secondarily Past-Oriented, it remains primarily Program-Driven but is secondarily Structure-Driven, and it remains primarily Congregation-Focused but is secondarily Core-Focused. As stated earlier, churches in Recline, whether Emerging or Developed, are quite attractive to already Christian people, so the church continues to experience growth through Transfer-Growth, but Conversion-Growth disappears.

Emerging Decline: Developed Recline gives way to Emerging Decline as the primary and secondary characteristics of Developed Recline switch positions. The ministry becomes primarily Past-Oriented and secondarily Present-Oriented, it becomes primarily Structure-Driven and secondarily Program-Driven, and it becomes primarily Core-Focused and secondarily Congregation-Focused. Transfer-Growth might still be present, but it is decreasing and is not keeping pace with the number of people leaving the church. Conversion-Growth remains a distant memory.

Developed Decline: As the church slides further down the backside of the lifecycle, Emerging Decline gives way to Developed Decline as all traces of Recline disappear. This is Decline in its purest form and positions the church as Past-Oriented, Structure-Driven and Core-Focused. There is No Growth as Conversion-Growth and Transfer-Growth have both disappeared. Without severe intervention, this church is going to die.

Vitalization Principle: The church lifecycle is a one-way street.

The church in Decline looks back to a previous time in the history of the church and longs to return to that time. By its very nature, Decline has a point of reference, a point from which it declined. That point in the past is always more appealing than the declined point in the present. Church leaders instinctively want to move right to left on the lifecycle, returning to that perceived prime time. However, if the objective of new vision is conversion growth brought about by outreach and evangelism, this backing up on the lifecycle will prove faulty and will not bear the desired conversion fruit.

The problem with this right to left movement begins with the perception that Recline, whether emerging or developed, was the prime time. Recline has its appeal with its present orientation, its emphasis on programs, its focus on the congregation and its transfer growth. Churches in the heart of Recline typically feature solid staff, stable finances, consistent congregation, a broad range of programs and nice facilities. What's not to like? What's wrong with this picture is that it describes features of a church that draw the reached, not the unreached, and it tends to draw those among the reached who have little concern for the unreached.

Still, the perception among leaders is that it was the programming of Recline that drew a crowd. So, attempts are made to recreate the programming, believing that the programming will serve as a magnet to draw people in. The only people that would be drawn in this manner would be already Christian people, not the objective of outreach and evangelism, but even they would be reluctant to come to a church caught in the characteristics and environment of decline. This is the classic cart before the horse scenario.

So, if programming is the cart, what is the horse? The horse is the outreach and evangelism that result from the Community-Focus of Incline. A people flow must be created before programming has any relevance, and programming will not create the desired flow of unreached people.

The principle, then, is: *The lifecycle is a one-way street.* A church can only move from left to right. The idea is not to back up on the lifecycle, but **to use the present lifecycle point of the church as the point of departure to launch a new lifecycle.** Repeating this process every few years allows the church to stack one season of Incline after another, never lapsing again into Recline and Decline.

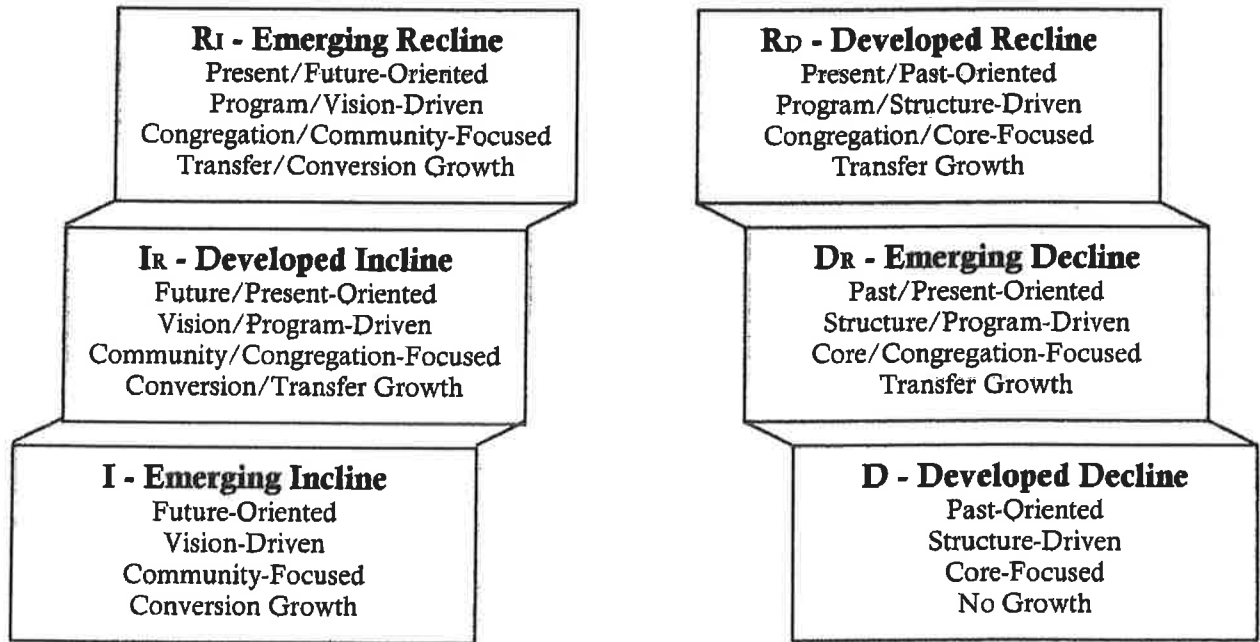
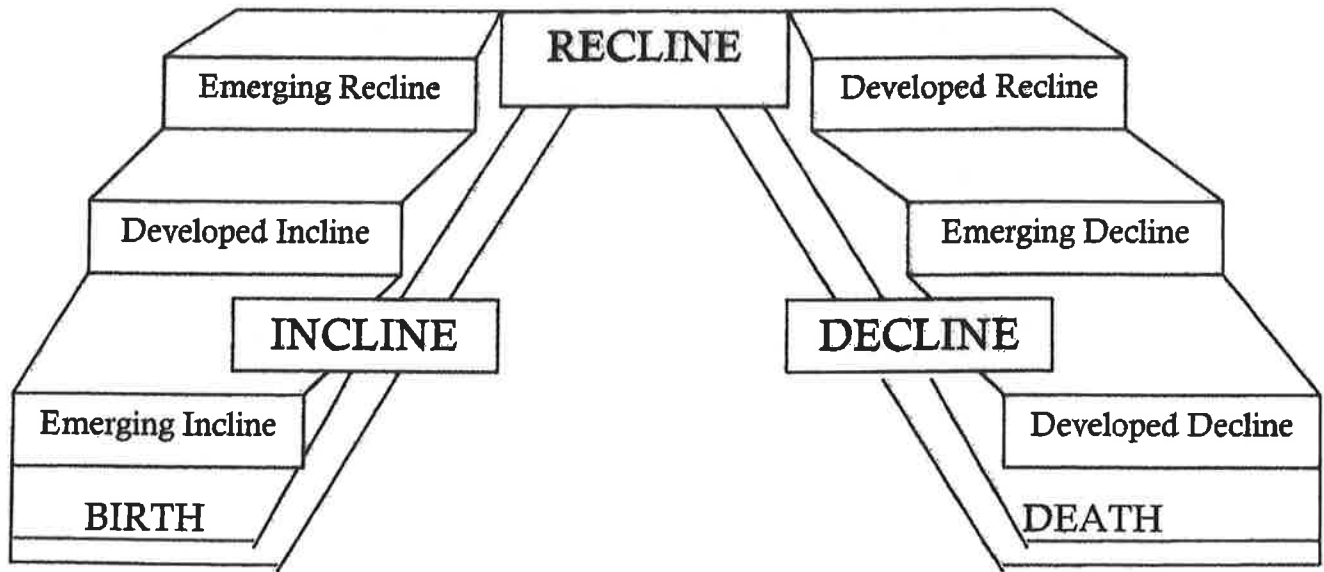


Figure 15

Vitalization Principle
The lifecycle is a one-way street.

Figure 16

Take another look at Distinctive Characteristics. Consider once again which of the three distinctive characteristics in each category **most** describes your church. Mark with a check and tally.

Incline

Future Oriented
 Vision Driven
 Community Focused
 Innovative
 High Risk Faith
 Faith Decision
 Serve > Gifts
 \$ = Investor
 New Leadership
 Conversion Growth

Recline

Present Oriented
 Program Driven
 Congregation Focused
 Routine
 Low Risk Faith
 Resource Decision
 Serve > Slots
 \$ = Provider
 Established Leadership
 Transfer Growth

Decline

Past Oriented
 Structure Driven
 Core Focused
 Complacent
 No Risk Faith
 Indecision
 Serve > Default
 \$ = Preserver
 Incumbent Lead.
 No Growth

Total: _____

Total: _____

Total: _____

Based on more discussion and review of the Distinctive Characteristics and other training material, where is your church on the lifecycle?

Emerging Incline _____

Developed Incline _____

Emerging Recline _____

Developed Recline _____

Emerging Decline _____

Developed Decline _____

What evidence and/or reasons can be given to explain why your church is where it is on the lifecycle?

Given the statistic that over 80% of American churches are in Recline or Decline, it's likely that an assessment of your church has revealed that it, too, is in Recline or Decline. If so, it's time to launch a new lifecycle. That will require navigating change. Even if your church assesses as being among the minority of churches that are in Incline, it still might be time to launch a new lifecycle, intervening before the drift into Recline begins. The difference in these postures, as we have seen in our investigation of the Church Lifecycle, is that the treatment for churches on the "upside" of the lifecycle will be moderate while the treatment for churches on the "backside" or "downside" of the lifecycle will be more severe. Regardless, changes are likely in order.

Change is difficult under the best of circumstances because people tend to be change-resistant. It will be important for leaders, particularly the Vision Team, to help the congregation discover the need for change and to motivate the congregation to commit to making those necessary changes.

What would help your congregation discover the need for ministry change? What would motivate your congregation to embrace significant change? What would be so important to the people of your congregation that they would be willing to do things different, to sacrifice?

NOTES:



7.0 SETTING THE STAGE FOR VITALITY

A Revitalization "Formula"

Many church leaders have inquired about a simple formula for revitalization, a secret sauce recipe that would always deliver. There isn't such a formula, but there is a Scripture passage that gets close. It comes to us in the Book of Judges in the account of the ministry of Deborah, a prophetess. Chapter 4 informs that, again, the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. (Judges 4:1). Nothing new here. It seems that the people of Israel lived through multiple iterations of lifecycle when it came to their faithfulness to God. In this case, God's judgement left them in bondage and they cried for help. Deborah was judging Israel at that time and she mustered the troops under the leadership of Barak. By the grace of God and by the hand of God, the people of Israel routed their enemy and the captives were set free.

As is often the case with major highlights among the people of Israel, this moment was put to song and Scripture informs that Deborah and Barak sang this song. The lyrics are recording in Judges 5. The opening line reads:

*That the leaders took the lead in Israel, that the people offered themselves willingly,
bless the LORD. (Judges 5:2)*

To bless the Lord was, in essence, to thank the Lord, to express gratitude. God was to be blessed or thanked for His deliverance, for His bringing about this restoration victory. Two conditions were present on the part of the people of Israel. First, leaders took the lead and second, the people sacrificed willingly. When leaders take the lead in accordance to the will of God and under the hand of His blessing, and that is combined with the sacrifice of the people, the sacrifice of a congregation, restoration is the righteous outcome. Leaders must truly lead and people must sacrifice.

God is seeking the lost.

Luke 19 gives us the account of the encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus. At the end of this passage, Jesus states:

For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. (Luke 19:10).

The mission of Jesus Christ was to seek and save, a search and rescue mission that gives strong support to our commitment to evangelism. Clearly, God is seeking the lost, but what else, or whom else, is God seeking?

God is seeking true worshipers.

In John 4, we find Jesus in an extended conversation with a Samaritan woman beside a well. Much is to be learned from his passage, but there is one thing in particular that stands out regarding God's being a seeking God. In the exchange of dialogue, Jesus remarks:

But the hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. (John 4:23)

Indeed, God is seeking the lost, but God is also seeking true worshipers. In fact, the reason that God is seeking the lost is that they would become true worshipers. Salvation is not the finish line, it's the starting line. True worship is the finish line, and those who were once lost are found and mature into being true worshipers for all of eternity. So, we might conclude that the real objective of evangelism is not salvation but worship.

Worship in Spirit and Truth

What does it mean to worship in spirit and truth? Volumes have been written about this subject and this will not be an in-depth look at all that could be considered, but Romans 12 gives us simple insight. Paul writes:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2

We see from these two verses that worshipping in spirit is to be a living sacrifice. Further, to worship in truth is to be transformed by the renewal of one's mind. What renews the mind? God Holy Word. So, to worship the Father in spirit and truth is to live as a living sacrifice, guided by a mind transformed by His Word.

Again, the ultimate objective of evangelism is not salvation. The ultimate objective is to develop living sacrifices with biblically renewed minds into true worshipers.

8.0 – FOUR DISCIPLINES OF A GREAT COMMISSION CHURCH

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| PREEMPTIVE PRAYER | BASIC BIBLE |
| COST COMMITMENT | MISSIONAL MULTIPLICATION |

Figure 17

The vital church is a disciplined church whose members practice habitual spiritual behaviors that both develop and reflect biblical character. Though spiritual disciplines are many and varied, I cite four in this context that I believe are fundamental to Great Commission church vitality. Properly embraced, these four disciplines make a significant contribution to the assignment of church leaders “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:12-16).

8.1 Discipline 1: Preemptive Prayer

What is prayer? A prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Question #98

The first discipline is **Preemptive Prayer**, prayer that is offered as a first resort. Prayer preempts or precedes every endeavor of the church, laying a spiritual foundation that anticipates God’s working His will through all ministries that the church provides. I’ve never had anyone in evangelical circles deny the importance or power of prayer, and yet this behavior is far from prevalent in the church to the degree that it might qualify as a habitual discipline. Church leaders who desire to see gains in the vitality of their churches will practice and promote the discipline of Preemptive Prayer.

In 1993, I became pastor of a church in Phoenix, AZ, that at that time was an eighty-seven-year-old church that had declined to thirteen members, six married couples and one single young man. Simply stated, vitality was gone except for the ministry that the members of this tiny congregation provided for each other. By the grace of God we grew steadily, becoming a congregation of about three hundred fifty in the seven years I served with the church, with outcomes that went well beyond our expectations.

In early 1997, after having just moved onto new property and into a new multi-purpose building, we sensed the leading of God to begin planting churches in nearby northern Mexico. On our first trip to Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, we became acquainted with a small group of church plants throughout northern Sonora that had all been planted through one mother church in Magdalena. God was leading us to connect with this small network of plants but they were suspicious of us, having received commitments from American churches before that had gone unfulfilled.

As we prayed about this, we came to realize that we would need to provide a grand gesture that would demonstrate the seriousness of our commitment. One of these churches, in Nogales, was the closest to our church and the first church of the network with which we had made contact. So, we

asked their leaders to reveal their greatest need, determined that we would help them meet it. They told us that their greatest need was to have their own building so they could stop bouncing around from location to location, leasing space under market value until owners found a "real" tenant. They had been in seven locations in the past couple of years. Frankly, this was a bit beyond what we were expecting, but we committed to do what we could to raise money, buy a building and get this church plant into its own home.

At that point, we were a church of about a hundred seventy people, and we had just bought property and put up a building, committing to a large mortgage payment. We established the Project Mexico Fund and began to pray for God to provide the funds needed to help our new friends in Mexico. Gradually the fund grew to \$22,000.00 while leaders in Mexico searched for a suitable building, finding a perfect property that included a warehouse, a courtyard and a small house. The price tag was \$40,000.00 USD.

One day a call came from Mexico that the owner of the building they were currently using had found a tenant and that the church had to move out in a matter of weeks. A new building was needed immediately and so we went to prayer. During the service the following Sunday, I explained the situation and asked for people who were strongly committed to Project Mexico to stay after church for a brief meeting. During that meeting I went into more detail and asked for ideas as to how we could generate that additional \$18,000.00 almost overnight. Though \$18,000.00 was not a huge sum of money, we were a small congregation that was already adjusting to a large mortgage payment.

I had to leave the meeting briefly to say goodbye to a staff person whose family was moving away. On returning, a man near the door grabbed my arm and asked to speak with me outside. We stepped out and he informed me that he had recently received a large bonus through his employment and that he had come to church that Sunday with two checks, one for \$4000.00 for the church and one for \$5000.00 for Project Mexico. Upon my announcement regarding Mexico he had withheld those checks and was now thinking he should give the entire \$9,000.00 to Project Mexico. I affirmed that decision, even though our administrator had told me on Friday that if we didn't have a "good" Sunday offering we wouldn't make payroll the next week.

Now only \$9000.00 short, we could see that God was moving so we developed a plan. First, we prayed, and then I sent a detailed letter to all members early in the week explaining the situation. I called for prayer and fasting throughout the week in preparation for a special offering that would be taken up on Sunday for Project Mexico. On Sunday morning, I led a small prayer meeting before the service, and then opened the service confident that God would bless our efforts by bringing the money forth.

We altered the Order of Worship that Sunday, starting with one song followed by the special offering. A short explanation was given and the offering bags were passed. Our administrator was to take the offering back to the office for counting so that we could announce the total at the end of the service. We knew we were taking a high risk regarding this announcement, but we thought the best thing that could possibly happen for the kingdom would be for the additional \$9000.00 to be raised, and that God would honor Himself by doing so.

At the close of the service I walked to the lectern on which our administrator had placed an envelope. Inside this envelope was a sheet of paper with the amount of money raised printed in very large type. To be completely transparent, I was very confident all throughout the service that the amount needed would be there, but as I approached the lectern my heart started to pound and my knees felt a little weak. As I held the envelope, I said to the congregation, "There is no amount of money in this envelope that could be too large. The first \$9000.00 buys the building, the next two or three thousand covers the closing cost, and anything beyond that buys chairs." I opened the envelope, took out the sheet of paper and read the number \$12,624.25.

Our reserved, dignified, middle to upper middleclass congregation went crazy; people on their feet, shouting, crying; hugging. You would have thought we had just won the Super Bowl. Soon after we drove to Nogales and connected with the pastor and a few church leaders. I had four cashier's checks with me for \$10,000.00 each. We met with the owner and his attorney, transacted the purchase, and I walked out with the keys in my hand. After a short drive to the building, we stood outside and I handed the keys to the pastor. He asked me where on the side of the building we would like the name of our church printed. I simply said, "Nowhere," and explained that this had nothing to do with us, and everything to do with God's plan for him and his congregation.

That day was by far one of the highlights of my ministry life, and the entire experience was undergirded by the power of prayer. Prayer is the oxygen of the personal spiritual life as well as the body life of the church. Note the following Scriptures concerning prayer:

Psalm 62:8

Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

Nehemiah 1:4

As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Matthew 7:7-11

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"

1 John 5:14-15

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Ephesians 6:16-18

In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2

Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.

Daniel 9:17-19

Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name."

Matthew 26:41

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Luke 18:7-8

And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

Acts 12:5

So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.

8.2 Discipline 2: Basic Bible

Jesus Christ is the Living Word of God and Scripture is the Written Word of God. Scripture is the authority that illumines and governs the life of the committed Christian and the life of the committed Christian church. This authority is captured in the phrase *Sola Scriptura*, *Scripture Alone*, that was formulated with several other *Solas* during the Reformation in the sixteenth century. In its context, it emphasized the unique authority of the Word of God over and above the authority of the Catholic Church or the Pope himself. Scripture, and Scripture alone, was identified as the sole authority over faith and life for the follower of Christ. As 21st century believers, we must get back to **Basic Bible**.

Today there is a startling lack of biblical literacy in the church. Evangelicals claim that the Bible is the true Word of God and that it teaches the way to salvation and the way to live a Christian life, and yet evangelicals as a group are largely unfamiliar with what the whole counsel of Scripture holds. Perhaps because we are products of a *sound bite* culture, many in the church have a *sound bite* knowledge of Scripture, aware of certain highlighted Scriptures, such as John 3:16, but largely unaware of the depth and breadth of the comprehensive Word of God.

For example, as a church planter and revitalization pastor, I've served in a pastoral role with a number of churches. Over the years, I discipled one-on-one with many men, particularly young men ranging more or less from their late twenties to early forties. On several occasions, one of these men has made a statement to the effect that he was no longer in love with his wife, that he was unsatisfied in his marriage and that he was considering making a change. More than once a man has expressed that he was unhappy and added a comment along these lines: "God wouldn't want me to be unhappy, right?"

To be candid, I'm not a marriage counselor and have no formal training, but I do know the Word of God. In such cases, I would first make it clear that there is nothing biblical about being "happy." I would speak of a joy that surpasses simple happiness and point to Scripture to support that premise. I would go to the Creation Ordinances in Genesis regarding God's making man, male and female, in His image, and that His wife was, indeed, made in the image of God and was to be loved and honored as such. I would point out the Bible's teaching about a man's and a woman's becoming one flesh and that ripping that union apart would not be a smooth separation but would leave jagged edges that would have lifelong repercussions.

I would particularly dwell on the teaching of Paul in Ephesians 5 regarding mutual submission of husband and wife, and how husbands are called upon to love their wives as Christ loved the church, as follows:

¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making

melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

²² Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.^[a] ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Ephesians 5:15-33

This is an illustration of bringing Scripture to bear on a life issue. The combination of Scripture, prayer and conversation was helpful in many cases as these men experienced the power of Basic Bible and both the conviction and instruction that God's Word brings.

Biblical literacy is a must if a church is to gain vitality, and church leaders must move their congregations through the very basics of God's Word. Just as holy Scripture had authority beyond that of the Pope and of the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century, so does Scripture have authority beyond today's popular writers, intellectuals, pop psychologists, influencers such as Oprah Winfrey, and even leading evangelical preachers and writers such as Tim Keller, John Piper, Ravi Zacharias, and R.C. Sproul. They would be among the first to say so.

The bottom line is that the discipline of being in the Bible, Basic Bible, must be nurtured in a church if that church is to gain vitality. Note the following Scriptures concerning the Word of God:

Psalm 119:9-18

How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.

With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!

I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes!

With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth.

In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.

I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.

I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word.

Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

Ezra 7:10

For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

Luke 24:44

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

1 Corinthians 2:13

And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

Deuteronomy 4:2

You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.

John 20:30-31

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Acts 17:11

Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

Psalms 19:7-11

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

2 Timothy 3:14-17

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

John 5:39

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.

Romans 10:17

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

"And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good?"

Joshua 1:8

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Psalms 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

DOUBLE HOLY POWER

In order to move the congregation toward new vitality, you must get buy-in or ownership in the Great Commission vision and strategy that must prevail. You're not looking for simple agreement, cooperation or consensus; you're looking for conviction. Nothing convicts like the power of the Holy Spirit working through the power of the Holy Word - Double Holy Power. Create devotionals, Bible studies, teaching and preaching opportunities, small group studies, etc., based on the Scriptures that support these Great Commission disciplines. Encourage time in these Scripture texts individually and corporately to solidify the biblical mandates that generate vitality through Spiritual Renewal with Strategic Initiative.

8.3 Discipline 3: Cost Commitment

To follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is to embark on a "suicide" mission. That is the **Cost Commitment**. Scripture repeatedly calls the believer to die to self in order to live for Christ. Many churches today are failing to make the cost of discipleship clear, allowing their congregations to compartmentalize faith rather than having their faith in Christ permeate all layers of life. Following Christ is not something one adds to an already busy life. Rather, it is a commitment that takes over all of life as He become preeminent in the thoughts and actions of the believer.

It's common in our day for churches to emphasize God's love, grace and mercy over His holiness, righteousness and judgment, as if God is more of a pal or buddy than the sovereign Creator of the universe. A short step into the 10 Commandments reveals that God's expectation is to be the *First and Only God* in our lives. Note Commandments 1 and 2:

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. Exodus 20: 3-6.

Church vitality calls for a high Cost Commitment. The following Scriptures provide teaching and foundation for understanding the all-encompassing nature of being a disciple of Jesus Christ:

Matthew 22:36-38

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.

Matthew 10:37-39

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Luke 9:23-25

And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

Matthew 13:44-46

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Philippians 3:8-11

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Acts 4:15-20

But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name." So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."

Acts 5:40-42

And when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

Acts 9:13-16

But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

Acts 15:24-27

Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth.

Acts 21:10-14

While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done."

8.4 Discipline 4: Missional Multiplication

In the book of Genesis God instructs Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, launching His covenant with His people into being. The multiplication continues throughout providential time until it reaches completion, envisioned in Revelation as a multitude that is too numerous to count. Jesus restates this covenant of multiplication with the Great Commission of Matthew 28, charging His followers to go and make disciples of all nations. The faithful and orthodox church is centered on this Great Commission, pouring itself out that the lost might be gathered into the family of God. This is the thrust of **Missional Multiplication**, broken out in Parts 1, 2 and 3.

8.4.1 Discipline 4: Missional Multiplication - Part 1: General References

The following Scriptures speak to the general mandate of missional multiplication:

Genesis 1:22

And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."

Jeremiah 23:3

Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply.

Jeremiah 30:18-19

"Thus says the LORD: Behold, I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob and have compassion on his dwellings; the city shall be rebuilt on its mound, and the palace shall stand where it used to be. Out of them shall come songs of thanksgiving, and the voices of those who celebrate. I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will make them honored, and they shall not be small.

Isaiah 61:1-3

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.

Luke 4:16-21

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Luke 7:20-23

And when the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'" In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

Hebrews 6:13-14

For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you."

Revelation 7:9-10

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 9:35-38

And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

Matthew 24:14

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Matthew 16:15-18

He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Mark 4:20

But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

Luke 19:10

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

8.4.2 Discipline 4: Missional Multiplication - Part 2: The Acts of the Apostles

The Book of Acts chronicles the movement of the Holy Spirit in establishing the Christian church through the actions of the apostles. These are actions of **Missional Multiplication** as God grows His church through the ministry of the apostles. The word "church" occurs but three times in the Gospels, but is used twenty-three times in Acts, a book that is largely about the early multiplication of the church. This is *descriptive* as a history and is *prescriptive* in terms of how the church today must understand the Great Commission mandate as an element of ecclesiology.

The following Scriptures walk through the Book of Acts revealing a consistent and persistent numerical multiplication of the church:

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Acts 8:1

And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Acts 2:37-41

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:46-47

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 4:4

But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

Acts 5:12-16

Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

Acts 6:7

And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Acts 9:31

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

Acts 9:40-42

But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

Acts 10:44-48

While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have

received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

Acts 11:19-24

Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.

Acts 12:21-24

On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. And the people were shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a man!" Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.

But the word of God increased and multiplied.

Acts 13:46-49

And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region.

Acts 16:4-5

As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

Acts 16:28-34

But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

Acts 17:2-4

And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.

Acts 17:10-12

The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.

Acts 17:32-34

Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." So Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Acts 18:7-11

And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titus Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people." And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Acts 19:8-10

And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

Acts 19:13-20

Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

Acts 28:28-31

"Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."

He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

8.4.3 Discipline 4: Missional Multiplication – Part 3: Fish Stories

Jesus used a simple analogy with the fishermen He was calling to be His disciples, explaining that they would become *fishers of men*. At the time of their first calling, Jesus used a miraculous catch of fish to exhibit His power and to lay the foundation of His calling them to grow His kingdom through the miraculous catching of men, women and children. It's interesting to note that He repeated this miraculous catch of fish during one of His post-resurrection appearances, bookending His earthly ministry with this powerful, numeric display. His point then and now is that His disciples are to engage in **Missional Multiplication**, gathering a harvest that He provides.

The following Scriptures demonstrate the calling of Christ to be catching people with the Gospel:

Mark 1:16-18

Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Matthew 4:18-19

While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Luke 5:1-11

On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

John 21:1-14

After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

8.5 **Four Disciplines of a Great Commission Church Workshop**

The habitual behaviors of a congregation reveal its true values more accurately than its professions. For example, most congregations **claim** allegiance to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, but few truly **demonstrate** a sacrificial love for neighbor or a serious commitment to outreach and evangelism. The Apostle James might describe this kind of faith as dead. The good news is that disciplines can be formed and it's never too late to start.

Consider the first three of the Four Disciplines of a Great Commission Church. Note the biblical support for each discipline. Analyze your church's strengths or weaknesses in regard to each of these three disciplines.

Discipline 1: Preemptive Prayer

Discipline 2: Basic Bible

Discipline 3: Cost Commitment

Discipline 4: Missional Multiplication

Read the Luke 5 passage. Note that this event occurs at the **beginning** of Jesus' earthly ministry. Read the John 21 passage. Note that this event occurs at the **end** of Jesus' earthly ministry: post-resurrection/pre-ascension.

Answer and discuss the following questions:

1. What are the similarities in these two events?
2. What are the differences in these two events? Particularly note the different reactions by Peter.
3. How did John, the beloved disciple, know that it was Jesus?
4. Once on the shore, how did the others know it was Jesus?
5. Why would Jesus bookend his ministry with Miraculous Catches of Fish?

9.0 - THE GREAT COMMISSION MATRIX

We have noted God's big picture vision of a timeline that stretches from Genesis to Revelation, the timeline of redemptive history that provides the stage for God's plan of redemption. A multitude of men, women and children from all peoples of all times will be gathered into the harvest that is God's eternal family. The question is, "Will our church commit to playing its part in the unfolding of that redemptive history?"

If the answer to this question for any given church is, "Yes," then a second question takes center stage, the question is, "How?" The *how* will be driven by that church's commitment to the Great Commission, and by its development of Great Commission vision and strategy. With the commitment to Great Commission ministry made, the stage is set for moving into the nuts and bolts of strategic design, development and implementation. This can be accomplished through the application of the **Great Commission Matrix**.

Multiple Front Doors

The Great Commission Matrix creates multiple front doors through which lost people can find their way to Christ and into the ministry of the church. Typically, churches position Sunday morning as the primary, or only, front door to the ministry, expecting newcomers to visit on Sunday and then trickle down to other ministries of the church. The Great Commission Matrix model, however, positions every ministry area of the church as a front door, greatly multiplying access to the Gospel and to subsequent discipleship and worship opportunities. The Great Commission Matrix strategically defines and shapes the Great Commission commitment of a church and positions that church for dynamic missional multiplication.

"Positive Shifts in Thinking"

The missional church is expressing itself in new ways. Pastors and church leaders are recognizing they are each on a unique mission field - right in their own neighborhoods. They are beginning to see themselves as catalysts for the advance of the kingdom - taking the unchanging message to their "changing context." This has led to several positive shifts in thinking...

- from programs to processes
- from demographics to discernment
- from models to missions
- from attractional to incarnational
- from uniformity to diversity
- from professional to passionate
- from seating to sending
- from decisions to disciples
- from additional to exponential
- from monuments to movements

Ed Stetzer & David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community*, p. 48.

The Great Commission Matrix

Spiritual Renewal (SR) – Strategic Initiative (SI)
High/Low Strength of Commitment

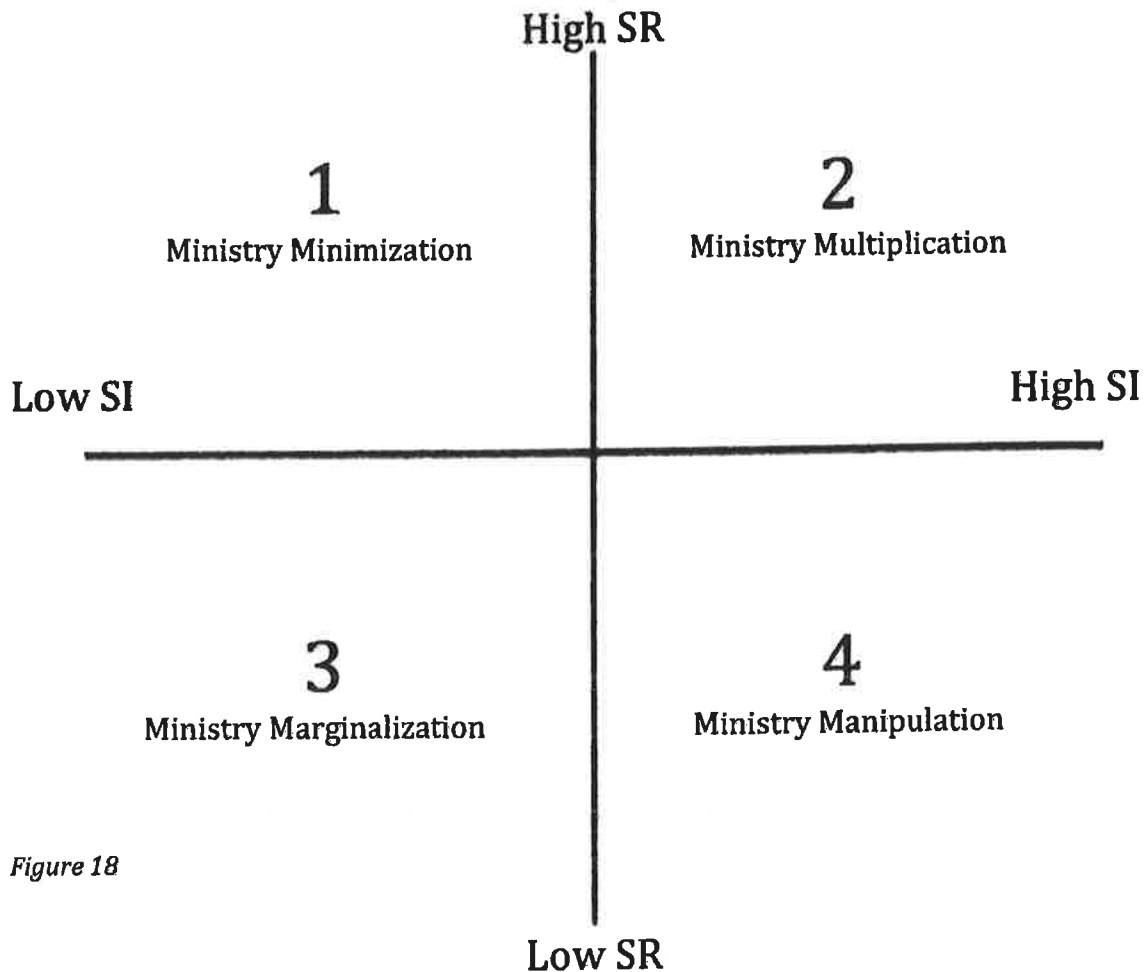


Figure 18

Recall our look at the Nehemiah Model of revitalization as a combination of Spiritual Renewal (SR) with Strategic Initiative (SI). These tandem platforms create the frame for the Great Commission Matrix. High to Low Spiritual Renewal (SR) forms the vertical axis and High to Low Strategic Initiative (SI) creates the horizontal axis. Together, they form the four quadrants of the Matrix.

Quadrant 1 blends a High Commitment to Spiritual Renewal with a Low Commitment to Strategic Initiative, resulting in **Ministry Minimization**. While High Spiritual Renewal is healthy, leaving it unsupported by Strategic Initiative minimizes the impact and sustainability of any revitalization effort. Spiritual Renewal might generate momentary inspiration and commitment, but without strategic legs, the impact of the church in the community goes nowhere. In short, the church experiences a spiritual “pep rally” or mountain top experience, but quickly returns to status quo back in the valley.

Quadrant 3 blends a Low Commitment to Spiritual Renewal with a Low Commitment to Strategic initiative, resulting in **Ministry Marginalization**. This is the church that is invisible in a community, having no impact or influence. From the perspective of the community, this church might as well not be there. It's pushed to the margins of consequence and, should that church close, the community wouldn't miss it.

Quadrant 4 blends a Low Commitment to Spiritual Renewal with a High Commitment to Strategic Initiative, resulting in **Ministry Manipulation**. Spiritual Renewal is assumed to be present and goes unattended while leaders focus on aggressive methodologies that are perceived to be the pathway to drawing people into the church. Often, this approach does indeed draw a crowd, but draws that crowd to what exactly and at what cost? Without the compass of Spiritual Renewal, the danger of falling into compromise and syncretism is high, and often this kind of church goes high on grace and low on truth, such that the growing crowd is not challenged by the whole counsel of Scripture. This might result in short-term statistical spiking but will not lead to healthy, sustainable growth.

Quadrant 2 blends a High Commitment to Spiritual Renewal with High Commitment to Strategic Initiative, resulting in **Ministry Multiplication**. This, of course, is the quadrant where credible and sustainable health, growth and multiplication reside. The high commitment to both and the healthy balance of both establish a truly healthy ministry culture that, over time, continues to mature spiritually and strategically. Quadrant 2 is the landscape for maximizing a church's influence and impact in a community and positions the church to be used by God in building His kingdom family.

As we moving forward in examining the Great Commission Matrix, Quadrant 2 will be our focus.

Groundwork has been laid for establishing the central strategy for revitalization. We have noted God's big picture vision of a timeline that stretches from Genesis to Revelation, the timeline of redemptive history that provides the stage for God's plan of redemption. A multitude of men, women and children from all peoples of all times will be gathered into the harvest that is God's eternal family. The question, again, is, "Will our church commit to playing its part in the unfolding of redemptive history?"

We have recognized the importance of establishing a Vision Team and its accompanying Prayer Teams. This Vision Team of pastor plus four or five other leaders is charged with the responsibility of discerning how God desires to express Himself through their church's commitment to the Great Commission, developing a Great Commission vision and strategy, directing the church through the vitalization process, and determining how progress and productivity will be evaluated and held accountable. This team should be able to be characterized as discerning, visionary, spiritually mature and well respected throughout the congregation.

Each Vision Team member is to be supported by a Prayer Team. This team will pray for the effectiveness and protection of the Vision Team and its work, as well as provide a communications network through which ideas and information can move among these valuable teams. We have studied the church lifecycle and have evaluated where our particular church is on that lifecycle. Four Disciplines of a Great Commission Church have been presented and discussed, Preemptive Prayer, Basic Bible, Cost Commitment and Missional Multiplication. We have examined the Four Quadrants of the Great Commission Matrix.

The stage is now set for moving into the nuts and bolts of strategic design, development and implementation. This will be accomplished through the application of the Great Commission Matrix.

The Great Commission Matrix

Spiritual Renewal (SR) – Strategic Initiative (SI) High/Low Strength of Commitment

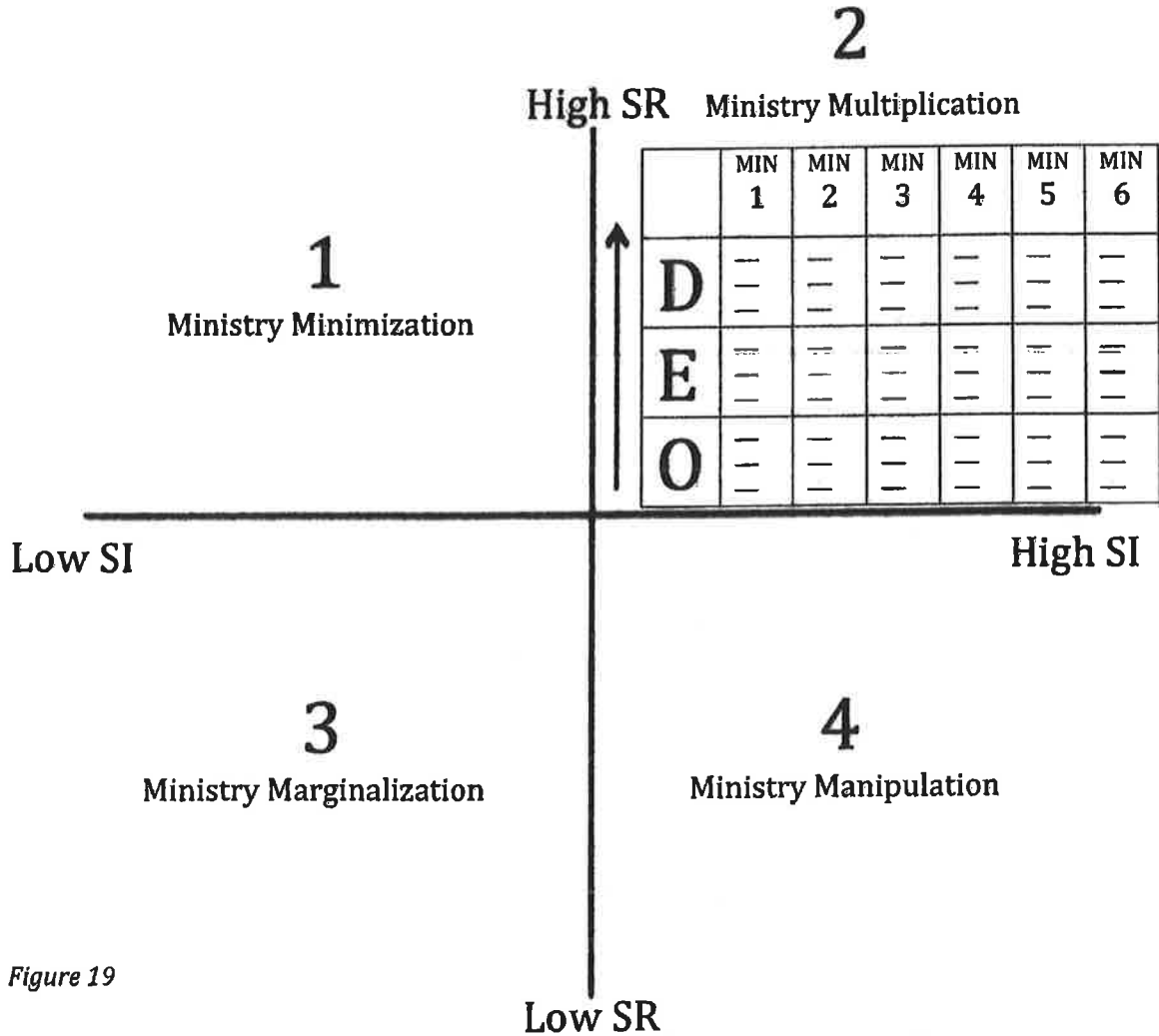


Figure 19

As we prepare to zoom in to Quadrant 2, a grid is placed in Quadrant 2 with another vertical axis and another horizontal access – a grid within a quadrant within the Matrix. The vertical axis, from the bottom up, indicates an O = Outreach, an E = Evangelism and a D - Discipleship. The horizontal axis indicates various ministry areas as MIN 1, MIN 2, MIN 3, etc.

Structurally and strategically, Outreach, Evangelism and Discipleship are separated from other ministry, removed from a typical list of ministries or programs of a church, and are being set aside for special treatment.

That treatment will be called a Movement. The church will not have an Outreach Program or an Evangelism Program or a Discipleship Program. These three will be Missional Ministry Movements. What qualifies them as movements is that they will be threads that weave through every ministry or program of the church. All ministries or programs will develop the capacity to provide Outreach, all will develop the capacity to provide Evangelism and all will develop the capacity to provide Discipleship.

Years ago, I attended a church of roughly 1200 members. There were 15 of us on the Evangelism Team. That's a program approach.

A church of 1200 should have 1200 on the Evangelism Team. That's a movement!

| | MIN 1 | MIN 2 | MIN 3 | MIN 4 | MIN 5 | MIN 6 |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| D | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| E | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| O | — | — | — | — | — | — |

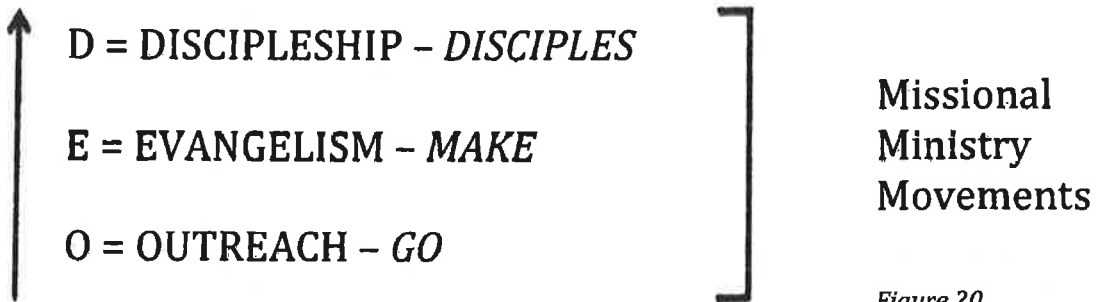


Figure 20

Let's begin our discussion of the Great Commission Matrix by looking at the left-hand column, starting at the bottom. We begin with **Outreach**, the "Go!" element of the Great Commission. Effective missional multiplication begins here. The goal is conversion growth as the church fulfills its redemptive calling and the commandment is to Go! Outreach occurs when people of faith in the congregation connect with people outside of the faith in the community, usually through outsider needs and interests. The objective of outreach is to build sustainable relationships with lost people, relationships that will provide opportunity for sharing the Gospel.

From Outreach we move upward to **Evangelism**, the "Make!" element of the Great Commission. Evangelism occurs when people outside of the Christian faith are connected to the crystal clear, Gospel of Jesus Christ. If the Gospel message has not been made crystal clear, evangelism has not taken place. I emphasize this point because I have observed that in many churches outreach has increased significantly, but there has been no such corresponding increase in professions of faith. It seems that many church people are viewing outreach as evangelism, believing that through outreach, and outreach alone, they have evangelized. This is a grievous error. Outreach and evangelism are not synonymous and regardless of how much worthwhile outreach is taking place, until the Gospel is clearly put on the table, evangelism has not happened.

With strategies for Outreach and Evangelism deployed, we move further upward to **Discipleship**, the "Disciples!" element of the Great Commission. It's at this strategic level that those who have come into the faith through outreach and evangelism learn what to believe and how to live through Christian education directed toward Christian living. Sadly, many churches practice discipleship as if intellectual understanding is all that's required. Though knowledge in the faith is of high importance, knowledge is a means and not an end. Sacrificially living for Christ (see Cost Commitment) is the objective, not simply Bible knowledge.

Vital 180s
NOT how do we minister TO our congregation
BUT how do we minister THROUGH our congregation?

Figure 21

Prepositional Paradigm Shift - "TO" to "THROUGH"

A seismic shift, captured above in the text box, changes a fundamental ministry question. The question is not, "How do we minister TO our congregation?" The Great Commission Matrix question shifts to, "How do we minister THROUGH our congregation to reach a lost community?" Looking through this lens changes the trajectory of ministry from congregational ministry that is a cul-du-sac or dead end to congregational ministry that is an intersection, albeit a round-about, that carries ministry through multiple avenues into and throughout a community, creating a Christ-in-culture reality that is typically absent.

In our look at the vertical axis of the Matrix we have, by definition, connected Outreach to sustainable relationships, Evangelism to sharing the Gospel clearly, and Discipleship to learning what to believe and how to live. In turning our focus to the horizontal axis, we encounter multiple columns labeled as MIN 1, MIN 2, etc., representing the various ministries or programs of the church. See *Figure 12*. In considering each column, the operating procedure is to have the leaders of that particular ministry area move to the bottom tier of their ministry's column to Outreach. They are to identify two or three Outreach strategies that will be deployed in that ministry area with the objective of building sustainable relationships. Next, leaders are to move up to the second tier and identify two or three Evangelism strategies that will be deployed to share the Gospel with those who respond to Outreach. Finally, leaders are to move up to the third tier, Discipleship, and conduct the same exercise to identify discipling strategies to lead those who respond to Outreach and Evangelism into maturity.

For example, let's say that MIN 3 is identified as Youth Ministry. Those who lead and serve in Youth Ministry would first turn their thoughts to Outreach strategies. The starting question is, "How can we reach out to, or connect with, the youth of the community through Youth Ministry?" Note that this is a very different question than how most churches operate. Typically, the default question is, "How do we minister TO the youth of our congregation?" The Great Commission Matrix question is, "How do we minister THROUGH the youth of our congregation to reach the youth of the community?" This perspective positions the Youth Ministry of a church for effective outreach. Two or three initial Outreach strategies should be developed and deployed.

Continuing our example, we move upward to Evangelism. The starting question is, "How do we clearly deliver the Gospel to the youth of the community with whom we've connected through outreach?" Again, two or three initial strategies should be developed and deployed. Following the development and deployment of Outreach and Evangelism strategies, we move upward again to Discipleship. The starting question is, "How will we grow youth from the community who have come into the faith through outreach and evangelism into living lives fully devoted to Christ?" As with Outreach and Evangelism, two or three initial Discipleship strategies should be developed and deployed.

GLOSSARY OF G.C. MATRIX TERMS

Outreach: The strategic connecting of people in the congregation with people outside of the congregation for the purpose of building sustainable relationships. It is these sustainable relationships that give opportunity to evangelism.

Evangelism: The strategic connecting of people outside of the Christian faith with a crystal-clear presentation of the Gospel including an opportunity to respond to the call of the Gospel. Note – if the Gospel has not been made crystal clear, evangelism has not happened.

Good News: Many congregations have greatly increased outreach in recent years.

Bad News: But many of these congregations are mistaking outreach for evangelism. Consequently, the Gospel is not being presented clearly.

Discipleship: Developing someone in his or her Christian faith with an emphasis on obedience to all that Jesus commanded. The objective of discipleship is not increased knowledge or moral improvement. The objective is true life transformation that is seen in behaviors and not simply in theological or doctrinal understanding, in orthopraxis and not simply in orthodoxy.

Ministry Area: Any program, department, sub-department, team or group that is employing strategies that impact people through Outreach, Evangelism, and Discipleship; the delivery systems a congregation develops to minister through the congregation to reach a community.

Strategy: The particular methods and tactics employed within a given ministry area to promote Outreach, Evangelism, and Discipleship.

The Lost: More than simply those who are without Christ, the Lost are those whose names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life but who have not yet come to faith. They are our missing brothers and sisters in Christ and we must reach them.

Worshippers: Formerly the lost, worshippers give themselves sacrificially to their Lord, driven by obedience to the Word of God. They do, indeed, worship in spirit and truth.

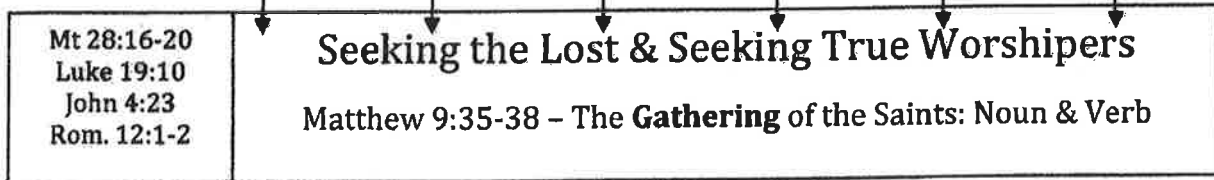
Gathering (noun): The gathering of the saints as a noun is the body of Christ having come together, a.k.a. the congregation.

Gathering (verb): The gathering of the saints as a verb is the drawing of the lost into the family of God through outreach and evangelism while serving in the harvest.

The Great Commission Matrix Quadrant 2

| | MIN 1 | MIN 2 | MIN 3 | MIN 4 | MIN 5 | MIN 6 |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| DISC Disciples! | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 |
| EVAN Make! | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 |
| OUTR GO! | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 | Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 |
| | | | | | | |

Figure 22



The key to leveraging the Great Commission Matrix effectively is the principle of ministry **THROUGH** the congregation rather than **TO** the congregation. This might give the appearance of shortchanging the congregation, but the truth is that people in the congregation will grow much further in their faith when they are *giving* ministry rather than when they are *receiving* ministry, an active rather than passive posture. Consider the first time you moved from being the student to being the teacher, whether in a Sunday School class, a Bible study, a small group, or some other setting. Most of us learned far more as teachers or leaders or servants than as students as the added responsibility pushed us toward more thorough study and preparation.

Multiple Front Doors

The Great Commission Matrix creates multiple front doors through which lost people can find their way to Christ and into the ministry of the church. Typically, churches position Sunday morning as the primary, or only, front door. The Great Commission Matrix, however, positions every ministry area of the church as a front door. The Great Commission Matrix strategically defines and shapes the Great Commission commitment of a church and positions that church for dynamic missional multiplication.

Great Commission Matrix Worksheet (permission to photo copy)

Use this worksheet to begin building your Great Commission Matrix by developing strategies in each ministry area to move people through Outreach to Evangelism to Discipleship.

Ministry Area:

Identify one to three strategies for moving people through each level of the Great Commission Matrix in this ministry area. Work from the bottom up.

Discipleship

Evangelism

Outreach

NOTES:

10.0 - THE GREAT COMMISSION MATRIX

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

GO Training is designed to move churches quickly onto the field of ministry with a robust commitment to reaching the lost and developing them in their faith. Early efforts are to be centered squarely on developing and deploying Outreach, Evangelism and Discipleship strategies in a *Ready - Fire - Aim* frame of mind. *Ready* and *Fire* are accomplished through Catching a Vision of God, understanding the Church Lifecycle, committing to the Four Disciplines of a Great Commission Church, and developing and deploying strategies through the Great Commission Matrix. With *Ready* and *Fire* in place, the focus then shifts to *Aim*.

Passion, energy and momentum are released as the strategies developed for the Great Commission Matrix are deployed, but the target is not simply to put the strategies on the field, but to work those strategies effectively over time so that lost people are reached and gathered into the family of God. Three elements need to be addressed, Ministry Objectives, Ministry Accountability, and Ministry Priorities.

Ministry Objectives

There is dialogue on the frontlines of today's missional movement concerning *changing the scorecard* for the church. Historically, ministry has been evaluated in terms of statistics, such as attendance and giving. Ministry has been measured in terms of busyness and how full the church calendar is packed with services, activities and events. However, thousands of churches are busy as can be, hosting something at the church seven days a week, and yet many of these churches fail to see a single profession of faith in the course of a year.

The issue is not busyness but effectiveness, and the first step in establishing effectiveness is to identify Ministry Objectives. Every ministry area of the church must identify objectives so that resources are expended in ways that are directed and fruitful. Objectives create targets or destinations to be pursued and hitting those targets or reaching those destinations reveals the progress that is being made. Without objectives, ministry flails into ineffectiveness and, though busy, progress is not made.

Ministry Accountability

Identifying Ministry Objectives is the first step, but that must be followed by a second step, Ministry Accountability. In other words, ministries must be held accountable to reaching the objectives that have been established. If this accountability is not going to be put in place, there is really no point in having objectives at all as they are not self-regulating. There is no need to be heavy handed or legalistic about accountability, but there is a need to evaluate each ministry in terms of reaching its objectives. Questions should be asked such as, "Was the objective reached," "Was the objective reached easily or with difficulty," "If the objective was reached easily, was that objective set too low," "If the objective was not reached was it set too high, or is there another explanation for low performance?" The point is to pay attention to progress by way of objectives in order to ensure that progress is made. Objectives can always be adjusted when appropriate as those serving in a given ministry area track their progress. Over time, accountability will inform leaders which ministries are proving most effective and which are not, allowing adjustments in resource allocation to be made so that the most effective ministries are substantively resourced.

Ministry Priorities

As mentioned, when Ministry Objectives and Ministry Accountability are studied over the course of time, certain ministries will surface as very effective while others will be found lacking. At this point, two kinds of effectiveness should be considered. First, was a given ministry effective at reaching its objectives? Second, were the ministry objectives identified the correct objectives? What is a correct objective? It's an objective that has significant ties to the Great Commission, to effective Outreach, Evangelism and/or Discipleship. It's of little value to reach an objective that is not a Great Commission objective. So, at this point, we're not only evaluating the reaching of objectives, but we're evaluating the Great Commission integrity of the objective itself.

Ministries that reach correct Ministry Objectives will emerge as our most important ministries. Since resources are always limited, these are the ministries that must receive the lion's share of those resources. All ministries are not created equal and an equal distribution of ministry resources makes no sense if the goal is Great Commission effectiveness. Ultimately, certain ministries will be identified as Ministry Priorities, completing the initiative to take *Aim*.

10.1 Bottom Line Church Vision & Strategy

In summary, *GO Training* comes down to two essential considerations, one focused on vision and one focused on strategy.

Vision: The Great Commission is the Vision!

The Great Commission is the vision and the vision statement. There is no need for the church that desires to get at the ministry of vitalization to spend months developing a vision statement that will likely be more about theological and doctrinal precision and articulation than reaching the lost with the message, grace, love and life of Jesus Christ. Don't waste time. Adopt the Great Commission as both vision and vision statement.

What are we trying to accomplish? Why?

Two questions drive the understanding of vision: "What are we trying to accomplish," and "Why is that what we are trying to accomplish?" The "what" is spelled out in the Great Commission, "Go and make disciples." The "why" is quite simply that Jesus commissioned us to do just that, and He instructed us to love God and love people. There is no mystery here. Just go!

Strategy: The Great Commission is the Strategy!

Not only is the Great Commission the vision, it's also the strategy. There is no mystery here, either. The Great Commission gives the church its vision to go and make disciples of all nations and its strategy to do so is to be obedient by going and making disciples of all nations.

What are we going to do? How? When?

Strategy puts feet to vision, asking, "What are we going to do? How? When?" It need not be more complicated. With the Great Commission driving the vision, strategy becomes clear as the Great Commission Matrix provides the grid through which strategies are developed and deployed.

How will we know what's working and what's not?

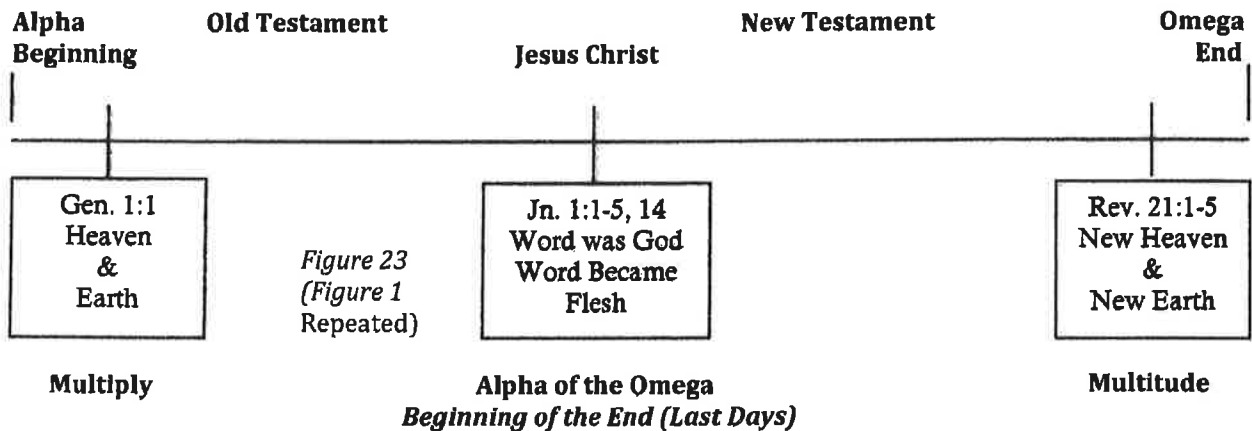
To stay on target and reach correct objectives, accountability and evaluation are in order. We will know what's working and what's not because we will keep a watchful eye on the progress of our ministries.

What adjustments will we make?

With accountability and evaluation revealing the upsides and downsides of ministry progress, adjustments will be made to increase effectiveness throughout the ministries of the church. It's often in these adjustments that maximized effectiveness is realized.

10.2 A Final Comment

CATCHING A VISION OF GOD
Seeing God – Seeing What God Sees
The Place to Begin: A Sovereign God with an Eternal Kingdom Vision



We will end where we began with God's big picture vision to redeem His people over time through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. God has a vision of a redeemed eternal family. We have the opportunity and responsibility to bring the lost into His family and develop true worshipers, and we have the opportunity and responsibility to be fishers of men, women and children.

Teach a Church to Fish

The anonymous adage says, "Give a man a fish and feed him for a meal. Teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime." Pastors and church leaders tend to want a formula for success or a specific list of what to do to make effective ministry happen. There is nothing helpful or productive in being spoon-fed a so-called formula for success, step-by-step instructions for hosting a series of activities or in being provided a set menu of programs. Every community is different from all others, and what works in one will not necessarily work in another. So, the idea is for church leaders to develop the skill of creating, executing and evaluating outreach and evangelism strategies on their own. In other words, when it comes to being fishers of men, these leaders must learn to fish for themselves. Then they will be able to feed the kingdom for a lifetime.

Excerpt from *The Leadership Ladder: Developing Missional Leaders in Your Church* by Steve Ogne and Ken Priddy (p. 68). *The Leadership Ladder* is available at churchsmart.com.

The best teachers are those who show you where to look, but don't tell you what to see.

Alexandra K. Trenfor

Let's GO Fishing!

Record Your Thoughts:

11.0 NOW WHAT? GO Training I Workshop Guide - Ready-Fire!

Date Completed:

Read **1.0** A Call to Action and consider your commitment. Are you in?

Read **2.0** The Great Commission and record your prayerful thoughts?

Read **3.0** The Cosmic Picture (3.1, 3.2, 3.3) and record your prayerful thoughts?

Read 3.0 The Cosmic Picture (3.4) and answer the questions.

Read 3.0 The Cosmic Picture (3.5, 3.6, 3.7) and answer the questions.

Read 3.0 The Cosmic Picture (3.8) and record your summary notes.

Read **4.0** The Community Picture (4.1) and record your prayerful thoughts.

Read 4.0 The Community Picture (4.2) and record your notes under each "B" Attitude.

Read 4.0 The Community Picture (4.3) and record your prayerful thoughts in the spaces provided.

Read **5.0** The Congregational Picture (5.1, 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.2) and prayerfully select the Vision Team.

Read 5.0 The Congregational Picture (5.3, 5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.4) and prayerfully recruit and mobilize Prayer Teams.

Read **6.0** The Church Lifecycle (6.1) and study Incline, Recline & Decline.

Read 6.0 The Church Lifecycle (6.2) and mark the appropriate checkmark for each Distinctive Characteristic. Complete the tally page, identifying your church as being in Incline, Recline or Decline and answer the questions that follow.

Read 6.0 The Church Lifecycle (6.3) and complete the tally page, more closely identifying your church as being in Emerging or Developed Incline, Emerging or Developed Recline, or Emerging or Developed Decline. Answer the questions that follow.

Read **7.0** Setting the Stage for Vitality.

Date Completed:

Read and prayerfully study **8.0** Four Disciplines of a Great Commission church.

Read and prayerfully study **8.1** Four Disciplines of a Great Commission church – Preemptive Prayer

Read and prayerfully study **8.2** Four Disciplines of a Great Commission church – Basic Bible.

Read and prayerfully study **8.3** Four Disciplines of a Great Commission church – Cost Commitment.

Read and prayerfully study **8.4 (8.4.1)** Four Disciplines of a Great Commission church – Missional Multiplication: General Scriptures.

Read and prayerfully study **8.4 (8.4.2)** Four Disciplines of a Great Commission church – Missional Multiplication: The Acts of the Apostles.

Read and prayerfully study **8.4 (8.4.3)** Four Disciplines of a Great Commission church Missional Multiplication: Fish Stories.

Complete **8.5** Four Disciplines of a Great Commission Church Workshop.

Read and prayerfully study **9.0 (9.1, 9.2, 9.3)** The Great Commission Matrix.

Read and prayerfully study **9.0 (9.4)** The Great Commission Matrix and begin to build the Matrix but using the Great Commission Matrix Worksheet.

Read and prayerfully study the GO Training I recap covered in **10.0** The Great Commission Matrix – Strategic Development. Record your thoughts.

NOTE the following:

11.0 *NOW WHAT?* Workshop Guide

Great Commission Matrix Ministries Worksheet(s)

Appendix 1 – Vital 180s

Appendix 2 – Scriptures Quoted or Cited

Appendix 3 – Book Recommendations

Appendix 4 – Notable Quotes

About the Author

About the GO Center

Great Commission Matrix Ministries Worksheet

Ministry Area: _____

Primary Leader(s): _____

Matrix Level: Outreach Evangelism Discipleship

Strategy Name/Title: _____

Strategy Description: _____

Projected Outcome/Objective: _____

Personnel Needed: _____

Resources Needed: _____

Projected Timeline: _____

(permission to photocopy)

Great Commission Matrix Ministries Worksheet

Ministry Area: _____

Primary Leader(s): _____

Ideas: _____

Appendix 1

VITAL 180s

NOT God's plan for my life BUT my life for God's plan.

NOT God's vision for our church BUT our church for God's vision.

As presented in Section 3.2, God does have a plan for our lives and a vision for our churches, but the higher priority is God's plan and vision for Himself. God and His plan, purpose and vision must be the center of our spiritual and ministry universe. It's God First and God Only. By giving ourselves to His plan and His vision for Himself, we will find His plan and His vision for us and our churches.

NOT once the congregation is on board, we'll begin to reach the community,

BUT once we begin to reach the community the congregation will get on board.

When embracing revitalization with an outward focus, leaders tend to think that the starting strategy is to get everyone in the congregation committed to this dramatic new direction, making outreach and evangelism contingent upon congregational ownership. This is a contingency that will never be met, so ministry, therefore, will never turn outward. Congregational ownership is a function of seeing the fruit that turning outward generates. So, the actual starting strategy is to mobilize that portion of the congregation that is ready to commit, however small, and begin to impact the community. As fruit of that outward effort is seen, more in the congregation will buy in and commit over time.

NOT once our ministry is fully committed to discipleship, then outreach and evangelism will naturally result,

BUT once our ministry is fully committed to outreach and evangelism, then discipleship will naturally result.

Leaders wrongly assume that if conventional discipleship is heartily engaged within a congregation, people will grow in their faith and that an effective witness will almost spontaneously erupt out of them into the community. However, there is no evidence to support such an assumption. In fact, the reverse is more likely. As a congregation impacts people through outreach and evangelism, those being impacted begin to hunger for spiritual growth and, in addition, the outward focused congregation tends to grow as people are actively engaged in ministry rather than engaging passively with preaching, teaching and study.

NOT solve internal church issues by looking inward toward the found congregation,

BUT solve internal issues by looking outward toward the lost community.

Similar to the On-Board Vital 180, when embracing revitalization with an outward focus, leaders tend to think that the starting strategy is to look inward toward the congregation to identify and address any internal issues that might be present as prerequisite to looking outward. However, plateau or decline in a church is largely a function of being inward focused. Looking inward to treat issues in this prerequisite fashion is simply another form of inward focus. Inward focus is not overturned by looking inward. The reverse is true; internal issues are effectively addressed and overcome by looking outward. Often, when this change of perspective comes to bear, many internal issues evaporate or become irrelevant or trivial.

NOT how do we minister TO our congregation,

BUT how do we minister THROUGH our congregation?

The TO-to-THROUGH Vital 180 is at the center of Great Commission thinking and practice. As long as leaders limit their ministry perspective to answering the question, "How do we minister TO our congregation," the Great Commission will never gain priority. The concept is simple, the question must change to, "How do we minister THROUGH our congregation to reach a lost community?" Placing this question front and center creates a mid-course correction that guides a congregation toward fulfillment of the Great Commission, and people in the congregation, far from being short-changed, mature significantly as a result of being mobilized from being conventional ministry spectators to being Great Commission Ministry participants.

Appendix 2

SCRIPTURES QUOTED OR CITED (ESV)

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>1.0 Matthew 28:18-20</p> <p>2.0 Matthew 28:18-20 Mark 16:14-20 Luke 24: 44-49 John 20:19-22 Acts 1:8</p> <p>3.0 -----</p> <p>3.1 Isaiah 6:1-8 Acts 16:6-10 Revelation 7:9-12 Revelation 21:3</p> <p>3.2 Genesis 1:1 John 1: 1-5, 14 Revelation 21:1-5</p> <p>3.3 John 20:19-21 Romans 10:13-15</p> <p>3.5 Matthew 9:35-38 John 4:34-38</p> <p>3.7 Nehemiah 1:1-11 Nehemiah 6:15</p> <p>4.0 -----</p> <p>4.3 Matthew 16:13-18 John 1:42 Matthew 22:334-40 Deuteronomy 6:4-5 Leviticus 19:18 Matthew 28:18-20 Revelation 7:9ff Acts 1:8 John 8:31 Luke 19:10 (1-10) Matthew 24:14 Revelation 7:9ff</p> <p>5.0 Matthew 28:18-20 Matthew 6:10 Proverbs 15:22 Proverbs 27:17</p> <p>5.1.2 Acts 6:1-7</p> <p>5.2 Proverbs 28:18 (KJV)</p> <p>5.3 Acts 1:12-14</p> <p>5.3.1 Ephesians 6:12 1 John 1:4 Matthew 6:10 Luke 11:2</p> <p>5.3.2 Philippians 4:4-9 Ephesians 6:10-20 Psalm 5:1-8 Matthew 9:35-38</p> <p>6.0 -----</p> | <p>7.0 Judges 4:1 Judges 5:2 Luke 19:10 John 4:23 Romans 12:1-2</p> <p>8.0 Ephesians 4:12-16</p> <p>8.1 Psalm 62:8 Nehemiah 1:4 Matthew 7:7-11 1 John 5:14-15 Philippians 4:6 Ephesians 6:16-18 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 Daniel 9:17-19 Matthew 26:41 Luke 18:7-8 Acts 12:5</p> <p>8.2 Ephesians 5:15-33 Psalm 119:9-18 Ezra 7:10 Luke 24:44 1 Corinthians 2:13 Deuteronomy 4:2 John 20:30-31 Acts 17:11 Psalm 19:7-11 2 Timothy 3:14-17 John 5:39 Romans 10:17 Deuteronomy 10:12-13 Joshua 1:8 Psalm 119:105</p> <p>8.3 Exodus 20:3-6 Matthew 22:36-38 Matthew 10:37-39 Luke 9:23-25 Matthew 13:44-46 Philippians 3:8-11 Acts 4:15-20 Acts 5: 40-42 Acts 9:13-16 Acts 15:24-27 Acts 21: 10-14</p> <p>8.4 Matthew 28:18-20</p> <p>8.4.1 Genesis 1:22 Jeremiah 23:3 Jeremiah 30:18-19 Isaiah 61:1-3 Luke 4:16-21 Luke 7:20-23 Hebrews 6:13-14 Revelation 7:9-10 Matthew 28:18-20 Matthew 9:35-38 Matthew 24:14</p> | <p>Mark 4:20 Luke 19:10</p> <p>8.4.2 Acts 1:8 Acts 8:1 Acts 2:37-41 Acts 2:46-47 Acts 4:1 Acts 5:12-16 Acts 6:7 Acts 9:31 Acts 9:40-42 Acts 10:44-48 Acts 11:19-24 Acts 12:21-24 Acts 13:46-49 Acts 16:4-5 Acts 16:28-34 Acts 17:2-4 Acts 17:10-12 Acts 17:32-34 Acts 18:7-11 Acts 19:8-10 Acts 19:13-20 Acts 28:28-31</p> <p>8.4.3 Mark 1:16-18 Matthew 4:18-19 Luke 5:1-11 John 21:1-14</p> <p>9.0 -----</p> <p>9.4 Matthew 9:35-38 Matthew 28:18-20 Luke 19:10 John 4:23 Romans 12:1-2</p> <p>10.0 -----</p> <p>10.2 Genesis 1:1 John 1:1-5, 14 Revelation 21:1-5</p> |
|---|---|--|

Appendix 3

KEY BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples by Thom Rainer & Eric Geiger

With: Reimagining the Way You Relate to God by Skye Jethani

Total Church: A Radical Reshaping around Gospel and Community by Tim Chester & Steve Timmis

BOOKS by GO CENTER LEADERS

The Silent Church: 39 Reasons We Keep the Good News to Ourselves by Ken Priddy (eBook & Manuscript Edition)

VACANCY: Finding Who's Missing & Bringing Them Home by Ken Priddy (Manuscript Edition)

The Leadership Ladder: Developing Missional Leaders in the Church by Steve Ogne & Ken Priddy

The Leadership Ladder WORKBOOK by Steve Ogne & Ken Priddy

Take Heart by Bill Senyard

Jubal's Worship Primer: Leading Worship & Leading Worship Leaders by Ken Priddy (eBook)

MORE BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

Missional Church by Darrel L. Guder

Church 3.0: Upgrades for the Future of the Church by Neil Cole

Living by the Book: The Art and Science of Reading the Bible by Howard C. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks.

Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ by Dallas Willard

The Tangible Kingdom by Hugh Halter and Matt Smay

Cultivating a Life for God by Neil Cole

The Gospel App: Life Applications for Stressed People by Bill Senyard

Doing Church as a Team by Wayne Cordero

Sticky Teams by Larry Osbourne

Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church by Reggie McNeal

Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture and Create Movement by Will Mancini

The Connecting Church 2.0: Beyond Small Groups to Authentic Community by Randy Frazee

The Master Plan of Evangelism by Robert Coleman

The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit by Craig Van Gelder

The Rise of the Nones: Understanding and Reaching the Religiously Unaffiliated by James Emery White

Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity by Nancy Pearcey

The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church by Timothy Z. Witmer

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Appendix 4 NOTABLE QUOTES

Going Deep

Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but deep people.

The classical Disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond the surface of living into the depths. They invite us to explore the inner caverns of the spiritual realm. They urge us to be the answer to a hollow world . . .

God intends the Disciplines of the spiritual life to be for ordinary human beings: people who have jobs, who care for children, who must wash dishes and mow lawns. In fact, the Disciplines are best exercised in the midst of our normal daily activities. If they are to have any transforming effect, the effect must be found in the ordinary junctures of human life: in our relationships with our husband or wife, our brothers and sisters, our friends and neighbors.

Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, p. 1.

The Human Soul

Our soul is like an inner stream of water, which gives strength, direction and harmony to every other element of our life . . . When we speak of the human soul, then, we are speaking of the *deepest level of life and power in the human being*.

The nonfunctioning soul falls easy prey to the mob and to pressures from others. It is the source of the "other-directed person" and "the lonely crowd" that are so prominent today. . . So it really doesn't matter what our *theories* are, or how "modern" we may be. Soul will always reassert itself as a reality, if only by the shambles left behind when it departs.

Dallas Williard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ*, pp. 204-205

Courage to Surrender

It is the experiential knowledge of God's love – his unyielding goodness toward us – that delivers us from fear and gives us the courage to surrender to him. Real faith, real surrender is only possible in the LIFE WITH GOD posture. As John said, "Perfect love casts out fear." When we live with God, when we are united with him and experience his goodness and love, fear loses its grip on our souls. With promises of God's boundless love, LIFE WITH GOD breaks the endless cycle of fear and striving for control. When we live in rich communion with God, we are set free to fly, knowing that the Catcher will never let us fall.

Skye Jethani, *With: Reimagining the Way You Relate to God*, p. 121.

WITH: REIMAGINING THE WAY YOU RELATE TO GOD – Skye Jethani

Life Under God – win favor and control God by combining rituals and morality (p. 26).
Life Over God – God, the watchmaker, wound the watch; we understand and control (p. 46).
Life From God – we believe in a God who exists to satisfy our consumer desires (p. 63).
Life For God – accomplishing his mission however we may define it; doing before being (p. 84).

LIFE WITH GOD:

The LIFE WITH GOD posture is at the core of the cosmos: God the Father *with* God the Son *with* God the Holy Spirit...God himself came to be *with* us – to walk *with* us once again as he had done in Eden in the beginning. Jesus entered into our dark existence to share our broken world and to illuminate a different way forward. His coming was a sudden and glorious catastrophe of good (p. 101).

Simple Church

A simple church is a congregation designed around a straightforward and strategic process that moves people through the stages of spiritual growth. The leadership and the church are clear about the process (clarity) and are committed to executing it. The process flows logically (movement) and is implemented in each area of the church (alignment). The church abandons everything that is not in the process (focus).

Four Elements of a Simple Church:

Clarity: Starting with a Ministry Blueprint

Movement: Removing Congestion

Alignment: Maximizing the Energy of Everyone

Focus: Saying No to Almost Everything

Thom Rainer & Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* p. 67.

The Essence of Vision

It's become fashionable in recent decades for companies to spend countless hours and sums of money drafting eloquent vision statements, values statements, mission statements, purpose statements, aspiration statements, objective statements, and so on. Such pronouncements are fine and good – indeed, they can be quite useful – but they're not the essence of a visionary company. *Just because a company has a "vision statement" (or something like it) in no way guarantees that it will become a visionary company!* If you walk away from this book thinking that the most essential step in building a visionary company is to write such a statement, then you will have missed the whole point. A statement might be a good first step, but it is *only* a first step.

The essence of a visionary company comes in the translation of its core ideology and its own unique drive for progress into the very fabric of the organization – into goals, strategies, tactics, policies, processes, cultural practices, management behaviors, building layouts, pay systems, accounting systems – into *everything* that the company does. A visionary company creates a total environment that envelops employees, bombarding them with a set of signals so consistent and mutually reinforcing that it's virtually impossible to misunderstand the company's ideology and ambitions.

Jim Collins & Jerry I. Porras, *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, pp. 201-202.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Ken Priddy is a seasoned ministry development practitioner, trainer and consultant who serves as Executive Director of the GO Center. Additionally, Ken is president of Leadertown, a training and consulting enterprise that serves multiple for-profit and non-profit organizations and businesses. He has served as a revitalization trainer with Global Church Advancement and with the Fresh Start Churches Network, and serves as an adjunct/guest professor with several evangelical colleges and seminaries. Ken and his wife, Sharon, have three daughters and a son, four grandchildren and reside in Richmond, VA.

Ken's ministry history is heavily weighted in church planting and revitalization. A former church planter and revitalization pastor, Ken, since 2000, has devoted himself to working with pastors and church leaders to establish health, growth and multiplication in their churches through a vitality process built on two platforms, Spiritual Renewal with Strategic Initiative.

Dr. Priddy holds the Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees from Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, FL. His D.Min. dissertation is titled, *ReStarting the Dying Church*. He also holds the Doctor of Philosophy in Biblical Studies from Newburgh Theological Seminary in Newburgh, IN. His Ph.D. dissertation, titled, *A Theology of Multiplication*, has been developed into a book titled *VACANCY: Finding Who's Missing & Bringing them Home*, due for publication in fall 2019. This timely book considers the biblical underpinning of both qualitative and quantitative growth in the church.

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ABOUT THE GO CENTER

The GO Center takes its name from the Great Commission – GO and make disciples. The GO Center Team is a dedicated group of revitalization trainer-consultants and coaches that brings insight, teaching, training, consulting and coaching to evangelical leaders who are committed to growing the kingdom of God. The need for church vitality is great and the need for effective outreach and evangelism is great. The GO Center is helping local churches and their presbyteries meet those needs.

To learn more about the ministry of the GO Center, contact:

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