

“Respect those who work hard among you”

– I Thessalonians 5:12

Leader Strong Churches



by Truman Scott, Ph.D.

SUNSET BIBLE STUDY LIBRARY

Leader Strong Churches

By Truman Scott



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“Leader Strong Churches”

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DEDICATION

*To the members of the Faculty of
Sunset International Bible Institute
of Lubbock, Texas,
who, from its beginning in 1962, have
emphasized that the health and growth of
the local church depend directly on training
able, knowledgeable, whole, and dedicated
leaders.*

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Since 1962 Sunset International Bible Institute has been a leader in teaching God's Word, training local church leaders, and preparing preachers and missionaries for effective ministry. Developed in the laboratory of preacher training and proven in the crucible of practical ministry, the Sunset curriculum has grown to forty core courses used both in our resident school and distance learning applications. In 1989 the Sunset Video Studio was inaugurated to record each course of study in a professional format. Those courses, each with a companion study guide, have been used to teach thousands of individual students and develop a world-wide network of video satellite schools in local congregations and mission fields.

Now in printed form that same library of trusted Bible study material is available through Sunset Institute Press for an even wider circle of Bible students, thanks to a benevolent God, an excellent editorial staff and a number of faithful supporters who believed in the project.

This book is the result of a multi-step process which began with a video taped course. The voice track of the video tape was first transcribed, then formatted and edited from spoken to written style. The goal of the editorial process has been to produce a readable document while protecting the course content and the style and personality of the teacher. We believe the goal has been achieved and that each of the forty books planned for the Sunset Study Library will likewise achieve that goal.

Special gratitude must be expressed to Cline Paden and Truman Scott who began the video course series in 1989, to Bob Martin, who directed Sunset Video Studio, to Virgil Yocham and the staff of Sunset External Studies Division who wrote the study guides, to Darlene Morris and the staff of

Sunset Translation / Editing Center who edited the manuscripts and to each faculty member of Sunset International Bible Institute who took extra time to prepare and present these courses in the studio.

This book and its companion volumes are being translated into the major languages of the world to produce a Bible Study Library which can be used on the mission fields of the world to mature Christians, train church leaders, and grow churches that plant other churches.

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Introduction

Many are writing these days about the characteristics of a growing church. Others are writing and speaking about the obstacles to church growth and the plans and programs that can make a difference in the growth experiences of churches. A book on church growth would describe a growing church as follows:

- Her worship is celebratory.
- Her members are biblically educated.
- Her leaders are biblically mature.
- Her purpose and goals are well defined and clearly communicated.
- Her members have discovered, developed, and are employing their rich, ministry gifts.
- Her purpose groups are dedicated in fulfilling the congregational goals.
- Her members and programs are people concerned.
- Her members and leaders are whole in Christian virtue and piety.

In this writing, we will be studying church growth, but with a focus on the characteristics of Leader Strong Churches and their development of quality leaders. Throughout the studies, our attention will be given to what makes a church a leader strong church and how a leader strong church is God's chosen place for developing leaders after His own heart. Each one of the separate studies will feature a characteristic of a leader strong church. This emphasis is hoped to encourage the readers to purpose to be such a church and determine that a rich and steady stream of good leaders will emerge from the

congregation. It has been said that the best test to determine if a congregation is a parasite church (getting its strength from the health of others) or a producing church (growing its own leaders) is in the health and continuity of its leadership. They never get to the place that they are one heart beat away from not having sufficient leaders, especially in having able elders. Leader strong churches are producing churches. They always have an ample supply of prepared men ready for leader assignments. Such churches even send out a steady stream of able and well trained preachers to help other churches grow and be productive.

What you will read in this writing has been experienced in local churches. Most readers will identify with what will be in discussion, either from their knowledge of Scriptures or in personal experiences. Each reader is asked to improve on the comments found here either from Scripture or from useful experiences and pass on the improved information to others. Let's aim on raising up multiplied, leader strong churches throughout the land.

— Truman Scott

Leader Strong Churches Understand There Is a Leadership Urgency

A leader strong church understands the urgency of developing and maintaining a stable and continuing flow of good leaders. This sense of urgency is derived from multiple considerations.

Leadership Urgency Is Seen in the World Around Mankind

Election years remind citizens of the need for trustworthy leaders. Political parties scramble each cycle to find people who can convincingly win the confidence of voters and hold the support through their time in office. The problems often seem larger than the abilities of the elected leaders. There is no shortage of “wanna-be” leaders, but there is a never-ending longing on the part of the public for principled and wise leaders who are capable in confronting the task before the citizens.

Conflicts and wars underline the urgency of competent leaders. History records serious, costly leadership mistakes in the many battles fought among the nations. The Civil War between the States was likely prolonged for lack of competent leadership resulting in the senseless loss of thousands of brave men.

Financial upheavals, resulting in deep recessions or staggering inflations, can often be traced to incompetent or

unprincipled leadership. People with hands on the financial mechanisms of an organization, municipality, or nation demonstrate the urgency of good leadership. Many unnecessary reverses have resulted from weaknesses in leadership, even as recovery and good management have resulted from good leaders taking charge.

The Urgency of Leadership Is Seen in the Abundant Opportunities Within The Church

Quickly passing opportunities demand decisive leadership. Opportunities do not wait long before evaporating, never to return. The indictment of James 4:17, “*Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin*” (NKJV), underlines the urgency of having good leaders who know how to be decisive in seizing every opportunity. The greater the need, the greater is the need for well-chosen leaders. The Church has been assigned the role of meeting the greatest human needs. She needs the most knowledgeable, faithful, ethical, competent, and whole leaders of any body on earth.

The Urgency of Leadership Is Seen in What Churches Are Accomplishing

Churches of Christ have put considerable emphasis on urging each local congregation to develop and appoint her own leaders, resulting in a self-led, autonomous church. Where there was no elected group of elders, a qualified evangelist provided prime leadership. What has been the results of such emphasis as regards Elders?

- **Number:** Nationwide in the 13,000 churches there are an estimated 20,000 elders. This number represents a

tremendous quality of teaching, decision, and faithfulness. Studies indicate that one out of three elders was not raised in the Church. Two of three attribute their salvation and growth to a woman: wife, mother, Bible school teacher, or someone along those lines. Every elder is a tribute to many people in the Body doing many things well. The number of active elders should be doubled. Many more should be in training to take their places.

- **Percentage:** Most observations indicated hardly fifty percent of churches have a biblically constituted leadership. While there is reason to rejoice over one-half of the churches having appointed elders, that means that one-half of the churches have not developed or selected leaders. What does this mean? Why is this true in a movement dedicated to the restoration of the New Testament Church? Some congregations are in remote areas. Some have lost their leadership because of transfers, lack of training programs, or division. A few are recently established churches. In all cases the number and quality or absence of leaders is a comment on the local church. The local church projects or reflects itself in the number and quality of her leaders.

Leadership Urgency Is Seen in the Pressing Needs in Local Churches

For all the leadership efforts in local churches and training centers the pressing needs outnumber the able leaders ready to confront them.

- **Condition:** While any congregation which has developed a biblical leadership should be applauded, many congregations are precariously positioned, having only two elders. They are one heartbeat, one job transfer, even one

decision away from a leadership vacuum. With only two elders there is a wall of urgency surrounding the church, threatening its efficiency, even its unity, perhaps its survival.

- **Ratio:** One man can relate well to 35 people. Having developed strong people skills, being deeply motivated, and devoting large quantities of time, most elders are able to extend their circle of intimacy beyond 35 people to upwards of 70 people. In churches with elders, the ratio is often one elder to 105 members — two to three times less than the ideal. In many churches, especially in the larger churches, the ratio is **one elder to 140 members** — four times less than the ideal. In these cases it is difficult for elders to identify and respond to member needs. An increase of competent elders would enable the leadership to ensure that not one member has need of anything (cf. Acts 4:34). An improved elder-to-member ratio, assuring needs being met, could dramatically reduce the dropout number of members in most congregations.

Leadership Urgency Is Seen in the Demand for More Whole and Skilled Leaders

Often goodness, faithfulness, generosity, and longevity in a congregation are awarded with an appointment to the eldership. Others are appointed because of recognized success in their career fields or their likableness. Without diminishing any of these indicators in considering future elders, wholeness in life and relationships and skills in leadership must not be passed over lightly.

- **Wholeness:** Studies have indicated that 65% of members are greatly handicapped in several important areas of their spiritual life. These growth areas include the ability to

forgive, to care, to manage anxiety, to discipline oneself, and other such areas. Leaders in these same churches, by reason of commitment and experience, have matured more in their spiritual lives but not greatly so. The same studies indicate that 40–50% of elders are greatly handicapped in several of the same growth areas as the members. A wounded army, led by some wounded men, cannot fight long or well. The army may be well equipped, highly motivated, deeply committed, faithful, and experienced in battle, but if the army and its leaders are wounded, it will struggle to win. Many lost battles and the loss of Christian soldiers must be attributed to many leaders and members being wounded even before they entered the battle against sin. Healing must precede fighting and winning. Healing must precede leading. As long as wholeness is given a lower priority in preaching, leadership development, and selection, exorbitant prices will continue to be paid for any level of victory.

- **Skills:** Goodness and faithfulness are important fundamentals in selecting leaders. Sad would be the church which failed to choose good men, faithful in their lives and practices. Yet, selecting good and faithful men who are skilled to lead more nearly responds to God's leadership requirements. In many churches there is a widening gap between the number and complexity of needs and the competency of Christian leaders. Doctrinal problems, interpretational questions, ethical issues, and family disruptions all have intensified in the post-modern society. Solutions to these problems require an increasingly higher level of knowledge and competency than similar, rural problems of the past. Leaders are under pronounced demands to raise their level of competency in the Word and in human relationships.

Leadership Urgency Is Seen in the Pressing Need for Priority Training

The churches of Christ during the 1950–1970 era were exploding in evangelism and numerical growth. Parallel to their growth was a priority being placed on training leaders. Most churches were conducting men's training classes, personal work classes, teachers' workshops, and youth meetings emphasizing leadership skills. Fewer churches today have ongoing training classes, leadership seminars, or even money specifically budgeted for leadership training. Fewer leaders are traveling to participate in leadership growth events. This lost emphasis over the last thirty years explains many current problems and, if continued, the neglect forecasts troubled years ahead.

Leadership Urgency Is Seen in How the Challenges Are Confronted

An Italian proverb says, “There are many a slip between the cup and the lip.” Recognizing leadership challenges and talking and writing about them will be one of many slips “between the cup and the lip” if these challenges are not confronted and changed. What responses can be made to the following questions?

- How can the number of elders (estimated 20,000) be increased? Can churches tolerate being led by too few men? A complicating fact is that the current number of elders is diminishing and younger men are less ready to even maintain the inadequate number of elders spread throughout the churches. Something determined and purposeful, some promising process with renewed

emphasis and a bolder and more emphatic challenge must be presented to churches.

- How can churches not having a biblically constituted leadership be encouraged to more greatly emphasize leader development? There are many valid reasons why some churches are not ready to “*... appoint elders in every town ...*” (Titus 1:5; cf. 1 Corinthians 4:17). There is no valid reason why any church should be indifferent or even resistant to training men to be biblical leaders. Some churches are far from having biblically appointed leaders, but they have to start somewhere and sometime to ever reach the blessed day when they are scripturally organized.
- How will churches with only two elders be encouraged to avoid the precarious situation of having no leadership if one is not able to serve? In the survival mode, every congregation needs to be developing the number of leaders who will be adequate for the challenges facing the congregation.
- How can churches be convinced that a few men can only do so much and the work left undone can have eternal consequences in the health of the congregation and of individual members? Too few elders will be forced to leave either member needs unmet or burn out in trying to do more than they do or do well.
- How can churches better focus attention on the need to have whole men in the leadership of a church, both in developing young leaders and in helping current elders to overcome some personality flaws that hinder their leadership? Properly motivated men, even older leaders, can grow to be more whole. Through ministry renewal efforts tremendous growth can occur within one year, changing dramatically the fruitfulness in the life of a leader.

- How can churches bridge the widening gap between the skill demands erupting in churches, especially those in mid-to-large cities and the competency level of many elders? If the church is going to keep and challenge its youth and reach out to the lost in a post-modern world, leaders will have to increase their leadership skill-sets.
- How can churches be encouraged to invest more in leadership training, making it one of the higher priorities in planning and financing their programs? Some men, from their own initiative, will grow without intentional planning by existing leaders, but never many and not so well as when the leaders make leadership training a leading characteristic of the congregation.

Conclusion

The responses to these challenges must include making every local church a center for leadership development. The leaders will be no stronger than the churches that produce them. The churches cannot have many strong leaders without intentional efforts in the churches. The **urgency of having biblical leaders**, well trained, highly motivated, and devoted to the LORD and His Word will have to pervade the churches across the lands.

Preview of the Next Chapter: **Leader Strong Churches Understand the Biblical Precedence for Congregational Leadership**

Leader strong churches are convinced that Christ directed His Church to develop specific leaders in the first century and for all time. They are convinced that God's people in the 21st

century have a clear mandate and a continuing model for the development of their leaders. They are convinced that the biblical precedence leaves the Church of today neither undirected nor free to originate her own form of leadership.

The next chapter will document and test the validity of those conclusions. It will be an interesting and pivotal study on Church leadership. It will impact church decisions on leadership development. It will map out a strong and clear sense of direction. It will undergird leadership development efforts with purpose and conviction.

Leader Strong Churches Understand the Biblical Precedence for Congregational Leaders

Most religious groups have not found a biblical precedence to guide them in developing a leadership structure or function. Each group is guided by its own traditional approach that was formed in post-biblical centuries. Their varied approaches to leadership are products of particular historical or cultural circumstances. Whatever may be their interpretation of biblical data, they see no authoritative pattern concerning leadership and, therefore, they feel no obligation to reproduce any practice of New Testament times.

If there is no recurring practice among apostolic founded and led churches of the New Testament times, each group would be at liberty to develop a leadership model that best achieves its purposes in its cultural situation. In that case, the issue is not so much about the authority of Scriptures as it is the lack of a binding precedence. Thus, both the urgency in developing a particular kind of leader and the leadership model operative in a religious body would be influenced by what one finds in Scripture.

However, a discovery in biblical data of God-given directions concerning the place, the selection, and the work of designated leaders would call the Bible believer to responsibility and accountability. The believer in such cases would not be at liberty to produce another form of leadership.

Biblical authority would become an issue if God had spoken and if the leadership found in New Testament times was to be considered a precedence for succeeding generations throughout all time and location. The issue would be if any form of leadership found in the New Testament could be made normative from then until now.

This study affirms that a leadership precedence is clearly discernible in the New Testament. This conclusion is based on a historical review of what the early churches did to meet their leadership needs. The conclusions at the end of the study are valid if a uniform response or practice among the churches that were led by the Apostles can be observed.

Jerusalem

In the early 30's A.D., the Church was begun by trained, apostolic leaders. In the early months, under the direction of the Apostles, congregational ministry leaders in benevolence and evangelism emerged. In this same growth period and while all of the Apostles were present, some brethren were named "*elders*" and given leadership responsibilities.

- **Acts 11:30:** The "*elders*" were the recognized custodians of funds contributed for the Judean saints in need.
- **Acts 14:23:** About fifteen years later, the Jerusalem "*elders*" participated with the Apostles in crucial decision making that the Church was expected to follow.
- **Acts 21:17–19:** About twenty-five years later, the "*elders*" at Jerusalem were still the focal point of leadership.

Apostles were present in Jerusalem at the beginning of this formative stage but some, according to Scripture and history, began traveling abroad and the "*elders*" became and remained the primary, congregational leaders.

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Southern Asia

Paul initiated a three-point, missionary agenda that he pursued across two continents. The first illustration of his mission agenda is observed in Acts 13–14, as he traveled through the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe:

- He preached the Gospel, calling sinners to Christ.
- He formed churches in every place.
- He organized churches with their own “*elders*. ”

Having completed the first two objectives in each of these four cities, Paul returned to complete the third agenda item and “. . . *appointed elders for them in each church . . .*” (Acts 14:23). The importance of appointing elders is easily seen since Paul considered this a priority, accomplishing his goals in all four cities in the brief one to two years period that the whole mission lasted. To Paul, the organization of the churches did not seem to be secondary, optional, or a matter of indifference. It seemed intentional, imperative, and specific.

Philippi

From the account in Acts 16 and from the Epistle to the Philippians, written just a few years later, it can be noted that Paul continued to follow his three-point, mission agenda. When he addressed the church at “. . . *Philippi, together with the overseers [elders] and deacons*” (Philippians 1:1), leadership development and appointments were already accomplished facts. To state the presence of bishops in the epistle requires Paul’s specific instruction on leadership and, perhaps, even the appointment of leaders in his earlier work among them. Again, Paul demonstrated the high priority he placed on leadership development and selection. What he had done in Southern Asia, he repeated in Europe.

Thessalonica

From Acts 17:1–9, it is clear that Paul preached the Gospel and planted a church in Thessalonica. From the first epistle to the Thessalonians it is clear that there were “*elders*” in the church. Paul wrote:

Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13).

The short time between the planting of the church and the reception of the first letter in which an established leadership is evident requires the conclusion that Paul, from the beginning of the work in Thessalonica, gave great emphasis to leadership development and selection.

Ephesus

From the account in Acts 19–20, it is clear that Paul did what he had done in other places. After preaching in Ephesus for three years and establishing the church, he made a brief trip to Macedonia and Greece. Then he returned and met with the elders from Ephesus at Miletus before sailing on to Jerusalem (cf. Acts 20:13–38). The time sequence strongly suggests that the elders were trained and developed during Paul’s recent years in Ephesus. Several years later, Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus and spoke again about the elders (“*pastors*”) of the church (cf. Ephesians 4:11).

Crete

Paul and Titus, evidently, evangelized the Island of Crete and planted churches. However, they had not completed their usual agenda before Paul left the island. The missing feature of

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his usual, mission agenda was the organization of the churches with their own elders. Titus was instructed to finish their missionary agenda: “*The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you*” (Titus 1:5). Then Paul reminded Titus of the kind of men to be appointed as “*elders*” in the churches (cf. Titus 1:5–10).

From this review of Paul’s leadership practices one must conclude that he established a precedence of preaching, church planting, and church organization in each new field of labor. He seemed driven by the commitment: **preach the Gospel to every person, form a church in every place, and appoint elders in every church.**

Asia

The brotherhood emphasis on leadership development and selection is emphasized by Peter in 1 Peter 5:1–4 as he wrote to many churches throughout the regions of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. In the time frame of not more than thirty-five years since the beginning of the Church in Jerusalem, elders were in prime roles of leadership throughout the five Asian provinces.

It is probable that the earliest Christians in those provinces came out of the first converts in Acts 2. Since many from these Asian provinces may have remained in Jerusalem for further instruction in the Apostles’ teachings, one could conclude they were instructed in the Gospel message, how to plant churches, and how to organize newly planted churches. Perhaps some of these converts may have been the result of Paul’s work in Ephesus and surrounding regions, even students in the School of Tyrannus (cf. Acts 19:9). The leadership development seen in Peter’s epistles is consistent with what is known of Paul’s leadership emphasis.

Jewish Churches in the Roman Empire

James, writing in the mid-sixties of the first century, speaks of the presence, influence, and work of “*elders*” in the churches (cf. James 5:14). His matter-of-fact reference to elders visiting the sick indicates the broad understanding and wide acceptance of the pastoral role of elders in the local churches.

Jewish Believers in Judea

Coming full circle back to Judea, it can be seen from the writer of Hebrews about the place and importance of church leaders. The primary reference is “*Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them . . .*” (Hebrews 13:17). Placed alongside the other statements about elders (cf. 1 Peter 5:1–4; Acts 20:28), the statements in Hebrews clearly point to elders as the focal leaders in the churches. One should not be surprised with the leadership emphasis in the epistle. Whoever wrote the epistle accurately reflected the consistent pattern found everywhere among the churches.

Summary of Data

From this historical-geographical survey, one can draw some important conclusions about leadership practices among the New Testament churches:

- The appointment of “*elders*” in every church was a high priority on the New Testament agenda. It was emphasized along with preaching the Gospel and planting churches.
- The practice was widespread across nations and continents.
- Appointment of “*elders*” in each church was a common practice by all the major leaders: Paul, Peter, Barnabas, Timothy, Silas, Titus, James, and others.

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- Of necessity, the organization of a church with its plurality of elders was a vital teaching that the Apostles were to observe and pass on in obedience to Christ's final commission (cf. Matthew 28:20).
- A precedence has been set for all churches, anywhere and for all time, concerning the development and selection of congregational leaders.

The congregation that understands the biblical precedence for leadership development sets a high priority on having leaders who have the same qualities to do the same work required of 1st century leaders. Leadership development and selection are not optional in the growth cycle of a healthy church. Thus, a mature, biblical church cannot be indifferent to a recognized need to have more and better leaders or ignore the precedence set by the Spirit-guided Apostles.

Testing Conclusions

There are two questions to be settled:

- Was there a settled practice among the churches of the 1st century to have congregationally appointed “*elders*” (“*pastors/bishops*”) in every local church?
- And, if so, did that widespread practice set a binding precedent for all succeeding churches in other cultures, other centuries, and in other circumstances?

The first question is largely a historical discussion based on what is believed to have been practiced in the apostolic period of the early Church. Most religious groups emerging out of the Reformation period of the 16th century have long rejected the view that the New Testament contains a pattern for Church

organization or leadership development. Most see hardly anymore than fluid, differing forms of leadership practices. Even among those who see a uniformly practiced form of leadership, they do not believe it was setting a precedent or a standard of leadership. Hence, in a religious world that differs greatly in multiple forms of church organization, even more conservative church leaders are being influenced to experiment with diverse roles and authority figures in local churches.

The second question is equally crucial. It presupposes that a standard, widespread leadership practice is clearly found in the New Testament documents. It further affirms that the Apostles were charged with setting the perimeters and principles that were to give birth to the Church, to guide the Church in its growth, mission, and worship, and to protect the Church from destructive influences and teachings (cf. Matthew 28:20). The Apostles either succeeded or they failed; they either obeyed or they disobeyed. The New Testament is either an inspired record of their faithful teaching efforts or it is not. However, if they accomplished their mission, if they obeyed their LORD, if the New Testament is an inspired record, then today there is a faithful, enduring record of Christ-taught truths and practices until Christ comes again. Any interpretive approach to Scripture that sets aside apostolic transmitted truths and apostolic prescribed practices is a threat to the whole fabric of Revelation.

Such a view often devalues what is found beyond the four Gospels. While it may hold the Gospel accounts of the life of Christ as core truths, it reduces the other twenty-three Books of the New Testament to being casual letters containing personal views relative to the local needs and, therefore, not binding to any other circumstance or time. Such views emphasizing the “theology of the Headship of Christ” may aim at balancing past views that placed undue emphasis on the Body. However, in so heavily emphasizing the “theology of the Headship of Christ,” they mutilate the “theology of the Body of Christ,” the Church.

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While their “new hermeneutic” may open dialogue with other groups, it is at the expense of ignoring fundamental teachings.

Each generation must validate the interpretative approaches and tools given to it. However, any hermeneutic, whether it is called new or old, that destroys what is in Scripture and gives nothing better in return needs to be rigorously rejected. The Church must never give up a balanced view of law and grace, faith and obedience, theology of the Head and theology of the Body, core truths and apostolic practices, clearly stated commands and clearly reasoned conclusions.

Conclusion

This study has illustrated a clearly developed pattern of leadership development that was practiced by apostolic leaders in the New Testament. Those who believe that the New Testament is a faithful record of what the Apostles faithfully taught early Christians have a continuing guide for leadership development as the Church changes through centuries, cultures, and continents.

Preview of the Next Chapter: Leader Strong Churches Understand the Value of Biblical Leaders

In this third chapter, the value of leaders as expressed in descriptive nouns like “*elder, overseer, ruler, shepherd*” will be considered. Also the value of leaders will be considered in observing the verbs that describe the work of “*elders*. ” This study should encourage believers to devote their best energies to leadership development because of the great value of well-qualified leaders.

Leader Strong Churches Understand the Value of Biblical Leaders

Leader strong churches place great emphasis on leadership development because they understand the value of biblical leaders. They have seen what happens to churches which fail in developing strong leaders or, even through no fault of their own, have lost their leadership. It has been observed that a congregation can survive for a while with either a faulty eldership or a faulty preacher, however, a congregation cannot survive well lacking both. The one constant in a thriving church is a strong, biblical eldership who keeps the value of biblical leaders in constant view.

The value of biblical leaders can be determined in several ways:

- By defining the leadership **nouns** in their biblical contexts.
- By studying the **verbs** of the Scriptures as they relate to approved leadership activities.
- By reflecting on leadership **functions** in today's churches that depend decisively on the work of biblical leaders.

Whenever God's people know and remember what is valuable to God they place value on what they do. Leadership development is high on God's list of values. This study is presented to any who want to know what God thinks about the value of scriptural leadership. This chapter will look at the

leadership **nouns**, **verbs**, and current **leadership needs** to emphasize the value of leaders in the Church.

Leadership Nouns

The leadership nouns in the New Testament best describe the **purpose** of biblical leaders. The value of leaders can be seen in the purposes they fulfill in God's designs for the Church.

ELDER — *presbuteros*¹

Of the 67 New Testament occurrences of the word translated “*elder*” sixteen specific references are made to Church leaders. This word is prominent in a Greek word family that includes words translated “ambassador,” “legate,” and words denoting leadership.

More than age is involved in the word “*elder*.” The thrust of the word deals with how well a person has used his years in becoming a mature, wise person. What have his years produced? Age is required to produce knowledgeable, competent, whole, and committed leaders. An older man who demonstrates the qualities of godly wisdom fulfills the intent of the word “*elder*.” James describes godly wisdom in the following way:

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, [easy to be entreated] full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere (James 3:17).

^{1.} Acts 11:30, 14:23, 15:2–16, 20:17, 21:18; 1 Timothy 4:4, 5:19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1.

The best, modern English word that conveys the meaning of the Greek term is probably **counselor**. The “*elders*,” because they are wise with the experiences and training of age, are intended to be the best counselors in the congregation. Their long, faithful, and fruitful life experiences in the Church have prepared them to guide the members wisely in all facets of life. Reading over the appointed qualities for an “*elder*” in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 commends them as men who should be approachable, confidential, sensitive, and wise in counseling the members in confronting their problems and growth opportunities.

OVERSEER — *episcopos*²

Older versions of the Scriptures translate the Greek word ***episcopos*** as “*bishop*.” The old word has lost much of its original meaning because of distorted, ecclesiastical uses. The word “*overseer*” is used in newer versions. It, too, is less than adequate in capturing the meaning of this Greek word. ***Episcopos*** is a compound word. The root, ***scopos***, describes one who watches, observes, even one who protects, knows, and cares for another. The prefix “*epi*” suggests on, upon, at the side of, nearby, at the elbow of another, which is different from what is usually quoted. Ecclesiastical renderings, prompted by hierarchical considerations, have excessively emphasized a minor rendering of “over,” giving the word a vertical and even a pedestal meaning of overarching authority (such as bishop of a church, diocese, superintendent, and other authority type words). Rather, the word properly translated better describes the nearness, watchfulness, protectiveness, and readiness to know and to care for the needs of the members. It perfectly describes the personal involvement of a spiritual leader in the

². Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 2:25. cf.
1 Timothy 3:1; Acts 1:21; 1 Peter 5:2; Hebrews 12:15.

lives of the members. He is in close relationship with the ones he is charged to help, to protect, to instruct. The best, modern English word that translates this Greek term is **mentor**. As mentors, the congregational leaders stay near each member, knowing and responding to every need. His instruction is person-oriented, his protective risk-taking-for-another is relational, his knowledge of the needs and potential of others are time based, and his timely readiness and availability are responsive.

RULER — *proistamai*³

Older versions of the Bible render the Greek word *proistamai* as “ruler.” Newer versions change the word to “leader.” The usual definition is rule over, manage, to take the lead. It is a compound word. The root *istamai* means to stand. The prefix *pro* means before. Together, the literal rendering of the compound noun would be one who stands before. Thus, leadership is to be understood as men who are standing before the members in readiness to teach, to protect, to encourage, to model, and to go before.

The emphasis of the word is the up-front visibility and exemplary modeling synonymous with leadership. To be a *proistamai* one must be a model in mature living, willing to risk the hurts of being transparent and vulnerable, able to process criticisms, and have the courage to initiate and lead people in walking with Jesus. Modern words that best express the meanings of the original word would be models, examples, even protectors, and shields.

^{3.} 1 Thessalonians 5:12;1 Timothy 3:4–5, 5:17; Romans 12:8. cf. Roman 16:2ff.

LEADERS — *hagoumenos*⁴

The Greeks used the word ***hagoumenos*** to describe their governors, rulers, and chief men. The core meaning is leading, guiding, providing. The emphasis is on going ahead, leading the way. In its biblical context it is not leading by autocratic rule (cf. 1 Peter 5:2–3) but with a servant spirit. It is a leadership model that fosters and calls for voluntary, respectful, and grateful submission of those being led. The better, modern English word would be facilitator, initiator, or coordinator.

PASTOR — *poimen*⁵

The common rendering of the Greek word ***poimen*** is “*pastor*” and more recently, “*shepherd*.” The meaning is to feed, to sustain, to tend to the total needs of the sheep. It pictures the shepherd as one who does whatever has to be done to sustain the lives and well-being of the sheep: feeding, leading to pasture, tending the ill, resolving conflicts, protecting against every threat, and other duties along those lines. It is obvious that by definition and usage the word ***poimen*** does not just describe another aspect of leadership, rather, shepherding is the overarching concept of spiritual leadership.

Summary

With the rich imagery of a Shepherd God in the Old Testament and Christ coming among men as the Shepherd in the New Testament, Christians should understand the many references to shepherd leaders throughout the Scriptures. Built on the model of biblical shepherds, shepherds today are chosen

⁴. Hebrews 13:7, 12:24.

⁵. Matthew 9:36; John 10:2–16; Hebrews 13:20; Acts 20:18–21; Ephesians 4:11–12; 1 Peter 2:25, 5:1–4.

men who, by reason of years profitably spent growing in and serving in the flock, have gained spiritual maturity and deep insights into the spiritual needs of the sheep. Out of such maturity, they stay near, always ready to help, to protect, and to meet the spiritual needs of each member. Their shepherding keeps them in the midst and before the congregation as examples to inspire, as shields to protect, and as guides to lead the faithful in fruitful lives.

As older, more mature men, elders are respectfully looked to by the younger, less mature members who have requested their guidance, by the older and weary who are more secure with the shepherds' concerned and protective care, by the strong and eager who yield to their wisdom, and by all who hunger for their feeding from the Word.

Leadership Actions

The value of leaders can be seen in what they do. Whereas the **purpose** of biblical leaders can be seen in the nouns in Scriptures, leadership actions are well described in the verbs of Scriptures.

- **Ezekiel 34:1–10:** A good background study of the value of Christian leaders can be seen in God's expectations of His Old Covenant shepherds. God's agenda for the shepherds of Israel was well defined. Ezekiel, the prophet, sternly reminded the shepherds that they were being held accountable to God to:
 - ▶ Feed the flock.
 - ▶ Strengthen the weak.
 - ▶ Bring healing to the sick.
 - ▶ Bind up the wounded.
 - ▶ Bring back the strays.
 - ▶ Search for the lost.

Any failure in these six areas of shepherding was a failure in being a faithful shepherd. Nothing grieved God more than the selfish shepherds of Israel who neglected His sheep. It is not difficult to see that what God required of the Old Covenant shepherds seems to be His continuing agenda for New Covenant shepherds (cf. Jeremiah 23:4, 50:6). God's shepherds were charged with the care and protection of the sheep. To accomplish such an awesome work they were urged to have God's shepherd heart and lead with knowledge and understanding (cf. Jeremiah 3:15).

- **Acts 20:17–38:** Paul urged the newly appointed shepherds of Ephesus:
 - ▶ To keep a close watch over themselves. They, like the shepherds of Israel, could become selfish and blind to surrounding dangers (cf. Acts 20:28).
 - ▶ To keep close watch over “*all the sheep*” in the flock. As in Ezekiel 34, some would be weak, others would be sick and wounded, and others would stray away and become lost (cf. Acts 20:28).
 - ▶ To feed and sustain each sheep according to individual needs (cf. Acts 20:28).
 - ▶ To be vigilant to every conceivable threat to the sheep from without or within (cf. Acts 20:29–31).
 - ▶ To pursue greater strength and hope in a relationship with God in a study of His Word (cf. Acts 20:32).
 - ▶ To find the blessings of unselfishly helping those who have nothing to give in return (cf. Acts 20:35).

- **1 Thessalonians 5:12–13:** Leaders are described as:
 - ▶ “*Those who work hard among you*” — Spiritual leadership is not a position. It is a work in a selfless, humble ministry.
 - ▶ “*Those . . . who are over you in the Lord*” — Spiritual leaders stand before the church to rule, to model, to teach as servants of the Lord.
 - ▶ “*Those . . . who admonish you*” as members.

- **Hebrews 13:7, 17:** Leaders are described as:
 - ▶ “*Who spoke the word of God*” — As noted elsewhere, a prime labor of a shepherd/elder is to be an effective instructor in the Word.
 - ▶ “*Who keep watch over you as men who must give an account*” — A shepherd/elder must give an account for the conduct of the members. Accountability would require keeping close, being involved in the lives of the members, knowing their needs, and being adequately aware how they respond to the grace of God and the opportunities He provides.

Thus, a shepherd, in this passage, has two responsibilities: giving sound instruction to members to guide them to serve well and to be accountable to God when members fail to be obedient members. The former responsibility requires constant and careful study in the Word and the latter responsibility requires vigilance, discipline, and humility.

- **1 Peter 5:1–4:** Peter, who served as a Christ-appointed Apostle and as an “*elder*” of the church probably in Jerusalem, urged the Asian elders to:
 - ▶ “*Be shepherds of God’s flock*” — Shepherds feed and sustain the flock of God.
 - ▶ “*Serving as overseers*” — Shepherds take the oversight of the church with the responsibility of mentoring, staying close to each member in his/her spiritual growth, and protecting each member in the spiritual conflict.
 - ▶ “*Willing . . . eager to serve . . . being examples to the flock*” — Shepherds do their work in such an exemplary way as to inspire the sheep of God. They speak of the well-motivated decision to serve with all of one’s heart and mind with integrity and value.
- **1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1:** A study of the prescribed qualities for elders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 shows the superb value of Christian leaders. Implicit in each quality is an action that shows the value of such a leader in the church. Consider the following overview:
 - ▶ The value of a faithful husband and father who is well regarded by his children.
 - ▶ The value of a man who is mature and exemplary in his relational and ethical life.
 - ▶ The value of a mature teacher in the church.
 - ▶ The value of an exemplary leader who is respected in all of his community relations.
- **Ephesians 4:11:** The growth and well-being of a local church are closely tied to the mature leadership of shepherds and evangelists. They are in a partner ministry

to equip the saints for serving and growing to the spiritual heights of Jesus. Without their joint mission being accomplished effectively, the local church would never reach her purposes and potential and would be in danger of dying or going astray.

- **1 Timothy 5:17:** The work of a shepherd/elder, especially in preaching and teaching, was so great that the Apostle Paul urged Timothy to teach the brethren to support them monetarily. The churches of the 21st century recognize the value of an able and dedicated minister of the Gospel. Likewise, churches must recognize the value of well qualified elders/shepherds and place a higher priority on leadership development. Churches will explode in growth when they recognize the value of full-time elders/shepherds who are devoted to the specific responsibilities of shepherds (cf. 1 Timothy 5:17–18).

Leadership Functions Today

If one still wants to know the value of leaders, he could look at all the good work being done by current leaders. Imagine what the church would be like if they were not doing their assigned work. Imagine how much more good could be accomplished if there were more and even better leaders.

The leadership functions in today's church are no less valuable and necessary than at the beginning. The original leadership purposes (nouns) and actions (verbs) still speak to pressing needs today. Nothing is happening today that would change the purpose or work delegated to leaders in the New Testament. If there is any difference, it would be for greater leadership training and skills to meet the more intensified and complex needs of this century.

Conclusion

A look at most congregations reveals a pointed and continuing need for shepherds who are elder-counselors, bishop-mentors, ruler-models, and leader-facilitators. When these kinds of leaders are lacking in quality or number, a local church suffers with needs unmet. However, every local church thrives with leaders who are active, as the verbs indicate, and accomplishing the leadership objectives as the leadership nouns suggest.

Preview of the Next Chapter: Leader Strong Churches Understand There Are Biblical Guidelines for the Development of Leaders

Strong leaders come from churches who know what kinds of men are needed to do the work of assigned spiritual leaders. This chapter will focus on 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. These two texts will present the exemplary life of a leader as a model in his family, his relational morals, his influence in church leadership, and as a respected community citizen.

Leader Strong Churches Understand There Are Biblical Guidelines for the Development of Leaders

Modern churches with strong leaders have understood from their biblical studies the quality of the men God wants to lead His Church. They have seen in Scripture the clear developmental outline that enables congregations to select their leaders with confidence. Because they are biblically knowledgeable of the leadership requirements, they will wisely choose men who will be equipped to serve long and well. However, a lesser instructed church will fall short in her development and selection of leaders. They will be influenced more by models of the world than by the standards of the New Testament. To the extent a church fails in the development and selection of leaders so the length and depth of the work of the chosen leaders will be compromised and the fruits of leadership will be diminished. Leadership development is likened to building a foundation for a building. The purpose and longevity of the building and the health of those within depend on the strength and durability of the foundation.

This chapter outlines the biblical requirements for leadership development that were taught and practiced in the early Church under the direction of the Spirit-guided Apostles. The faithful transmission of these principles to subsequent generations promotes confidence in applying them in leadership development. In the second chapter of this book, by observing

when and where churches were planted in the first century, it is clear that early Christians organized churches with elders and chose their leaders with a common standard in mind.

In the following descriptions of church leaders in Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3 it can be easily seen how churches were instructed concerning leadership development and selection. The balance of statements in the New Testament on leadership is consistent with the picture that Paul drew for Titus and Timothy to practice in Crete and Antioch.

Initial Views of Leadership Preparation

The well-being of the local church and how she fulfills the reason for being on earth depend greatly on her biblical knowledge and faithfulness in developing and selecting her spiritual leaders. In 1 Timothy 3:1 there are several, key words that underscore the importance of preparing for leadership.

- A prospective leader must be one who “**desires**” the work of an “*overseer*” — that is, he has set his heart on that servant role in the Kingdom. As such, he has set a priority in his life to be all he must be to be fruitful. He knows he must be biblically knowledgeable, ethically sound in all of his relations and practices, pure in thoughts and motives, whole in all of his personal qualities, and skilled in ministry according to his giftedness. Above all, he has made Christ the King of his life and the object of his service. He has prized his relationship with Christ as his greatest blessing and sets up a guard against anyone or anything that would attempt to steal his spiritual crown of jewels.
- A prospective leader must be one who “**desires**” (different Greek word) or stretches his every resource to excel in being all the leader God wants him to be. That is why, for

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a long time, he has been willing to spend time, money, and energy in Bible study, in learning servant and leadership skills, in associating with godly people doing godly things. A prospective leader will do as Paul said: “*I beat my body and make it my slave*” (1 Corinthians 9:27), showing his self discipline so as to be qualified when the appropriate time comes for him to be considered for leadership service.

- The use of the word “**bishop**” or “**overseer**” is significant in this context. The Greek word *episkopos* is a compound word. The prepositional prefix, *epi*, is best translated as “upon, on, nearby.” The core word, *skopos*, means to observe, watch, defend, even to mentor. Thus, the word is describing one who is nearby (at the very elbow of) to watch, to guard, to teach, to mentor. Translating the prepositional prefix as “*over*” gives it a hierachal, authoritarian, and ecclesiastical role and takes away from the intimacy, directness, and service meanings that were originally intended. Men serving as “**elders**” place a high priority and stretch every resource in order to be close to the church to protect, teach, comfort, and guide her members. These three words clearly teach that church leadership is reserved only for those who deeply yearn to be close to God’s people and are willing to make extensive investments to be prepared. Competent leadership does not just happen. It must be an intentional commitment pursued with the greatest level of seriousness and self-sacrifice. Leadership is not a reward for staying long in the local church, being successful in business or a professional, or being liked by most of the people.
- A strong motivation to set a high priority on leadership preparation and to strain every resource to reach one’s leadership aspirations involves knowing that being close to God’s people in service is a “*good work*” (1 Timothy 3:1, KJV). A man does well to devote his best fruits to a

good work. God, who pronounced all creation to be “*good*” (cf. Genesis 1), pronounced church leadership to be “*good*” also. Men and churches have a mandate to make and keep it “*good*” by the seriousness shown in the development, selection, and sustaining of competent leaders.

- Paul set a high, leadership standard by stating that a prospective leader must be “*blameless*.” The term literally means not arrestable. If the police were arresting men with poor conduct, they would **not** arrest a spiritual leader because his conduct would be above reproach. Spiritual leaders are to be advanced in their maturity so that they not only would not be charged but would be exemplary in their actions and attitudes. Basically, the term “*blameless*” would best be followed by a colon (:) to suggest that a spiritual leader would be exemplary in the traits listed in the text.
- Take note that the word “*must*” is repeated four times in the context of leadership traits. Each time it is in the singular suggesting the expected standard for each leader. This repetition of the term precludes the idea that the eldership as a whole must accumulatively have all the traits represented.

In 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 there is a portrait of a mature man. It serves well to guide parents in developing their sons to manhood. This portrait serves well to guide youth ministers in understanding some worthy goals in their ministry of helping youth grow to be like Christ. It serves well for a church in developing and choosing the kind of man to serve as an elder in the congregation. It serves well for young women in choosing their life companions. They see the kind of men that young men around them are becoming. On a daily basis, this portrait inspires all men to desire and commit themselves to

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become mature and exemplary in all the fundamental traits and relationships of life and service.

The Leadership Portraits in Life and Service

The leadership portrait emphasizes the leader's exemplary life in four important areas of life and service:

- **Home Relations**
- **Moral Maturity**
- **Church Relations**
- **Relations in the Community**

A leader is a model in family, relational morals, church leadership, and servanthood in the community.

Home Relations

How a man builds a strong, honorable, and loving relationship with his wife is an important measure of his being able to serve well in modeling and mentoring a God-honoring **marriage**. The statement, "*Now the overseer must be . . . the husband of but one wife . . .*" (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6), however it is understood, sets a high standard for prospective leaders. It speaks of integrity, sensitivity, understanding, kindness, thoughtfulness, unselfishness, and commitment. Too long the statement has been limited too much to a leader's **legal status** in the marriage. Thus, discussions have focused too narrowly on what he should not be: not a celibate, not a polygamist, not a divorcee, not a widower. It would be refreshing and insightful if the Church placed more emphasis on the inner qualities of the marital relationship. This emphasis is favored in the texts by the literal meaning of the statement: "he must be a one-woman kind of man." To understand what

a “one-woman kind of man” looks like would require a pointed study of other biblical passages throughout the Bible. Note the following summaries that serve as examples for being a **model husband**:

- **Genesis 1–2:** The biblical record of the beginning of all things includes the beginning of marriage. From the beginning God defined the qualities of a strong marriage, underlining the responsibilities of the marriage partners. He established the boundaries and set the goals every marriage needs:
 - ▶ Each couple must begin the marriage on the premise that God is the owner of marriage. By reason of origination and creation, He has the sovereign right of legislation (cf. Genesis 1:27). By His divine wisdom, He knows the best choices of mates, the best times to begin marriages, and the best values to guide relationships. To most greatly honor one’s Creator and assure oneself of building a mature marriage, one will do well to seek the guidance of God through prayer with the counsel of men and women who know God and by a guided study of God’s Word. There are predictable and dire consequences in attempting to build a marriage without regarding or going against what God has clearly and benevolently revealed to humanity.
 - ▶ Each couple needs to recognize how purposely different God has created each of them as acceptable members of marriage: male and female (cf. Genesis 1:27). Physical attraction is the most obvious and a greatly, compelling diversity, but it is not the only or necessarily the most crucial difference in building a compatible and lasting marriage. Recognizing the different created needs, responses, and roles of each other as marriage partners is

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vital to discovering and understanding one another. Add other diversities resulting from a marital partner's childhood development and one has the potential of building or destroying a marital relationship: diverse values, families, goals, education, race, attitudes, abilities, interests, and outlooks. When one or both in the marital relationship ignore the inbuilt diversities, the result almost inevitably becomes a distortion of diversity into adversity. Further, a diverse, heterosexual relationship has the greatest potential for meeting all the partner needs and honoring God's creative purpose for marriage. In such a relationship there is an obvious correlation of needs: physically, emotionally, sexually, and spiritually. God was so pronounced in wanting the best for His creation that He stamped homosexuality as a deviate behavior with some of the strongest language found in the Bible (cf. Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:24–32; 1 Corinthians 6:9).

- Each couple needs to recognize that marriage was designed to be a relationship of mutual service wherein both mates reach their potential in serving one another and in meeting one another's needs (cf. Genesis 2:18). When diversities are known and honored and every reasonable attempt is made by both partners to respond in a positive and creative way, a marriage has the greatest likelihood of succeeding in fulfilling both mates. When mates are left unfulfilled, they become more vulnerable to the offers of others to wrongly assume the role of mutually filling one's emptiness. Rarely can a marriage be a joyful and fulfilling experience when one mate sees marriage as a relationship wherein he or she is to be served by the other. Worse results come when demands are regularly made for immediate and full service without giving any priority to serving the other mate. Marriages thrive only when each mate finds joy in serving his or her mate and sees the other

mate making consistent and unselfish efforts to mutually respond.

- Each couple needs to recognize a compelling purpose to overcome all obstacles in building a strong marriage (cf. Genesis 2:24). There are many acceptable purposes for marrying and staying married. A marriage can achieve enjoyable companionship, a sense of security, the indescribable meaning of parenthood, and sexual fulfillment that is moral and honorable. More precisely, these qualities may be more accurately described as the **benefits of marriage**. The major, if not only, reason for marriage is to achieve a unity that would honor God and reflect His divine trait of Oneness. Over the course of a growing marriage a couple becomes one in purpose, one in values, one in achievements, one in the difficulties of life, one in procreation, and one in their continuing quest of oneness with God and His people. While there is room in a healthy marriage for interdependence with friends, careers, interests, and cultural pursuits, everything and everyone have to be placed on a lower priority or even be set aside if it endangers or strains the achieving of oneness with one's chosen marital companion. Even the re-dimensioning of one's precious, family relationships must be taken into account to insure one's focused commitment to becoming one with one's mate (cf. Genesis 2:24).
- Each couple needs to be singularly committed to a lifelong, unbroken relationship (cf. Genesis 2:24). In life, there is a covenant of faithfulness in keeping all the promises of mutual service, fulfilling needs, performing well in one's stated, marital role and in remaining chaste in the one-flesh relationship. Any thing or anyone who would try to disrupt that covenant of promises should be regarded as an avowed enemy and clearly treated as such. There would be no price too high to pay to protect each

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promise. There would be no time limit or circumstance, save death itself, that would lessen the sacred promises made. One may fall short in keeping a promise but every effort should be made to gather one's strength and purpose and to reaffirm and give new life to the defaulted promise. The contrite effort of a mate who has failed in keeping a promise must be met always by an understanding, patient, forgiving, and affirmative mate. Living with resentment and ending marital oneness by separation or divorce are not pleasing solutions in God's plan for building strong marriages (cf. Malachi 2:14–16, 1 Corinthians 7:10–11).

Starting with the Genesis account of the origin of marriage, the “one-woman-kind-of man” who is a prospective leader of God’s people sees God’s emphasis on the person and place of the woman. Her diverse needs are to be identified and fulfilled. Her equality in the marital partnership, her uniqueness and value in the marriage are to be honored. She must take precedence over all other human relationships or concerns (cf. Deuteronomy 24:4). The congregational development of good leaders must place a priority on guiding young husbands in becoming exemplary husbands.

- **Hosea 2:19–20:** In describing His covenant with Israel, God gave His children the best description of what a husband is to be. In Hosea God cited seven qualities of a Godlike husband:
 - **Intentionally committed for life:** A Godlike husband gives his bride every assurance, from the beginning and throughout the lifelong length of the marriage, that he will do everything he can do to ensure that the marriage will be built on a “forever” promise. The wife is continually assured that the marriage will endure all the difficulties of

life, all the distractions and strains, and all the failures on both sides. The wife knows her children will have a committed father, a spiritual partner, and a continual friend all the days of his life. She is reminded continually, whether in life or in death, her husband will have made preparations for her happiness and secure well-being.

- **Committed to do what is right:** A Godlike husband will determine to do what God has revealed to be right in all actions and decisions. Selfishness, sinful motives and actions, and breaking promises will grow less and less as he grows in knowledge and maturity. He is ready to openly repent when he acts wrongly, specifically confess his error, and implement what is right. His wife sees him putting what is right at the top of his priorities and in his teaching and mentoring of their children.
- **Committed to do what is fair:** A Godlike husband knows that fairness completes doing what is right. Impartiality, equity, consideration of the circumstances and needs of all involved in a decision, and clear and caring communication bring fairness to a relationship. Doing what is right and applying what is right to the specific circumstance and needs of the wife will reaffirm the wife every day that the husband cares specifically for her.
- **Committed to do all things with loving kindness:** A Godlike husband knows that righteousness and justice can become stern and cold without the warming expressions of kindness. After determining what is right and fair, a mature husband wants the best to occur in the life of his wife (agape love) and wants it to be expressed in the most tender way possible. In a sense, **loving kindness** is the language that a wife can best understand and to which she will best respond. Doing kind things out of a well-intentioned heart is the substance of loving kindness and

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surrounds the wife with a lifelong display of genuine affection.

- **Committed to do all things with compassion:** Doing what is right, doing what is fair, and doing what is kind out of a committed heart is complete when clothed with deep feelings for the wife. God designed a woman to be loved through all four qualities: rightness, fairness, intentional kindness, and compassion. Loving with compassion is never possible without the other three qualities having preceded each act of love. Compassion gives substance to right behavior. Compassion gives balance to fairness. Compassion is what kindness does. Compassion sees and understands the needs of a wife, knows how a husband's care can make a difference in helping the wife reach her created potential, and brings out the best in her life.
- **Committed to be faithful in the relationship:** A woman, who is secure in the love of her husband and never fearing the loss of his singular affection, is not only serene and affirmed but is free to be all that God designed her to be. She will never fear being rejected, diminished, abandoned, denied her greatest need, or left without the joys of a covenant faithfully honored. When a husband guards his mind and will and devotes every fiber of his body and every urge of his passion to moral fidelity, he encourages his wife to blossom in her femininity.
- **Committed to being transparent and intimate:** In the process of becoming mature, the husband will be transparent with his thoughts, his needs, and his appreciation for his wife. His transparency will be strengthened by thinking purely, purposely, and positively only things that he could gladly and profitably share with his wife. The two will grow in intimacy of thought, hopes, and failures. The intimacy will extend to mutual, sexual fulfillment as the husband learns how to meet the sexual

needs of his wife. He will learn what specific expressions on his part are most meaningful to his wife.

- **Ephesians 5:21–23:** The Christian standard for the mature husband is set in Paul’s treatise to the Ephesians where the husband is given the model of the relationship of Jesus to the Church. If a man has the right relationship with Jesus, then he will pattern his marriage after the love Christ has for His Church. A husband’s relationship with Jesus is compromised and his testimony of faith in Jesus is contradicted by failing to build a Christlike marriage. To enjoy an obedient, submissive relationship with the Lord, the husband is to commit himself to love his wife as Christ loved His Bride, the Church:
 - He is to love his wife without reservation, holding nothing back, making her more important than any other, knowing and fulfilling her needs, and being sensitive to her desires and preferences. She is the crown jewel of his life treasures and is treated as the most valued, being protected at all costs, being cared for with the most careful attention, being cherished with the best of his affections. He is to love his wife more than life itself, seeing and following the example of Christ who gave Himself for the Church.
 - He is to love his wife unselfishly, giving her the precedence, making her needs and desires the priorities of his planning and life, and never seeing his needs met at the expense of his wife and her needs.

When the wife regularly and consistently experiences the masculine affection of her husband she will feel secure, treasured, and special. Being loved as God designed her to be loved, she will be free to respond with dependency on him, trust or belief in him, and will delightfully recognize his

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value and accomplishments, giving him the praise and feminine acceptance that he most deeply needs from his wife.

- **1 Peter 3:7:** The “one-woman-kind-of-man” has learned Peter’s marital admonition to husbands in a four-way response to his wife:

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

- A mature husband lives with his wife intelligently (“according to knowledge” [KJV], “in an understanding way”[ASV]). He searches for the knowledge that will enrich his marriage. Early on he will be asking for counsel from wiser husbands, learning from a growing library of books and video studies on marriage, listening attentively to his wife, observing older husbands who have been succeeding in their marriages, and asking the elders of the church to observe and hold him accountable in his treatment to his wife. He will carefully determine if his childhood models of being a husband are to be emulated, modified, or rejected. He will learn that his masculine passions, unguided by knowledge and a submitted will, will not build the kind of marriage that meets the needs of his wife because being a man is not all there is to being a husband.
- A mature husband is considerate of his wife’s femininity (“as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman” [NAS]). He understands that God designed her to be amazingly different (cf. Genesis 1:27). She is more fragile, more sensitive, and needs special considerations. He learns that

there are distinct seasons of femininity and there are specific needs more prominent in each period that he must know and fulfill. When his bride is 20–30 years old, she most needs assurances of affection from him, affirming her value and his need for her; when she is 30–40 years old, she most needs assurances of security that the needs of children will be sufficiently met and livelihoods will be sustained; when she is 40–50 years old, her viability must be confirmed as she becomes the mother of the third generation and will need to feel the solidarity of her husband in her pre-menopausal stage; when she is 50–60, she most needs to be affectionately reaffirmed in her femininity as an explosion of changes begins taking place in her body and the end of reproductivity crashes upon her; when she is 60–70, she most needs to feel the acknowledgment of the multiple good she has done and the value of a life well-lived; when she is 70 +, she most needs to have the serenity in which she can savor the precious memories built over a loving marriage and a fruitful life surrounded by generations of dear ones. Her health issues will drain her but wise preparation of a loving husband will make her closing years secure, feeling loved and still valued.

- A mature husband honors his wife as a spiritual equal (“*heirs together*” [KJV], “*fellow heirs of the grace of life*” [NAS]). He learns that his wife has valuable insights into people, circumstances, and family needs. She will see other, equally profound dimensions in the study of Scriptures. It would be wise for him to encourage her to express her insights, acknowledge their value, and express appreciation when she shares herself. He will find joy in knowing that she stands as tall, loved, and applauded in the presence of God and will just as surely receive the greatly desired welcome into the everlasting Kingdom.

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- A mature husband knows that the ongoing fruitfulness of his spiritual life is predicated on building the right relationship with his wife. God does not listen to a husband's prayer when the husband fails to live with his wife according to knowledge, quits treating his wife as she was designed to be treated, and quits honoring her as a spiritual partner in the Faith.

These four Scripture selections, Genesis 1–2, Hosea 2:11, Ephesians 5:21–33 and 1 Peter 3:7, point the way for a young husband to become a “one-woman-kind-of-man” and able to be an exemplary leader in the church. Churches must teach each husband how to be singularly devoted to his wife, committed to building an exemplary relation wherein both are being fulfilled in growing to their maximum, marital maturity. Since a large majority of men in the Church are married, married leaders who are exemplary in their marriages can be effective mentors and models to most men of faith.

Good leaders are also **good fathers**. Much can be determined as to what kind of leaders men will be by what kind of fathers they have been. Paul instructed Timothy and Titus concerning what needed to be considered in the parental development of good men who would be appointed as effective leaders. Timothy was in the large, modern city of Ephesus with a culture that was likely more disciplined, ordered, affluent, and educated than that on the Island of Crete. While both cultures were immoral and under the influence of Grecian thought and pagan practices, Crete was the cesspool of the Mediterranean. The diverse needs in each place required different emphasis. In the instructions to Titus the best measure of a father was how well he had disciplined his children in a morally bankrupt society. In Timothy the best measure of a man's parenthood was how the children regarded him. A close look at both passages shows the measures are similar in the attitudes of the

children that result from the type of the father/child relations that have been built. Note that the emphasis is not on the children as much as it is on the parenting of the father. The children are an accurate measure of the parenting skills of the prospective leaders. Note that the emphasis in both passages will be on the skillful discipline of the father that engenders regard and right-mindedness on the part of children. So succeeding with his children gives hope to a father using those same skills to mature the church. Consider the following Scriptures:

• **1 Timothy 3:4:**

*Now the overseer . . . must **manage his own family well** and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)*
(1 Timothy 3:2–5).

The statement in 1 Timothy 3:4 that “*He must manage (“rules” [NKJV]) his household well*” (NAS) literally means that he stands before his family as a model, a teacher. It is more than functioning efficiently in finances, making good use of time and other resources. In all matters the children of a prospective leader should regularly observe model behavior in him that gives them a context of security, purpose, and affirmation. The emphasis of the text is on the impact his conduct has had on his children. Orderly children who hold their father in high esteem reflect how a man “*manages his household well.*” Children who are resentful, belligerent, detached, or indifferent to their father may call closer attention to qualities in the father that would be detrimental to his becoming an esteemed, affectionately regarded leader in the spiritual family.

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- **Titus 1:6:**

An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.

The statement “*whose children believe*” is one of the most insightful passages in the study regarding the parenthood of prospective leaders. It has also often been the major, disqualifying consideration in the leadership selection process. Many otherwise, highly qualified men have been excluded from consideration or later have resigned effective leadership roles because of commonly held views concerning the “*faithful children*” (Titus 1:6, KJV) statement. If the commonly held views are correct, then the cost of obedience is not too high. God will bless the obedience of His children. Rather, disregard of the rightful demands of the statement could be costly.

Looking again at the statement might be helpful. The meaning of the words, “believing children” or “faithful children,” most often, has been limited to obedience in baptism. Some have questioned if baptism, especially of young, adolescent children, is conclusive enough to test the leadership qualities of the father. Others suggest, in addition to baptism, that the demands of teenage years and early adult years would be necessary considerations to determine if the children are truly believers. Still others insist on a formal commitment to specific doctrines, church practices such as attendance and strict observance of dress codes and music preferences would form a part of “*whose children believe*.”

It would be insightful to remember that the word “believing” or “faithful” can be translated “persuadable,” “convincible,” or “teachable.” Thus translated, the emphasis

would be on the mind-set or attitude of the children. What is the child's attitude toward listening, learning, being corrected? Is the child reasonable, fair minded and open to learning, thus easily entreated and easily informed? If so, the child is most likely a good reflection of a father who is a humble learner, a quick study, and as a leader would be fair, open-minded, easily entreated, and easily informed. It would be fair to the text to note that a child's open-mindedness and teachability are more closely related to morality than to doctrine or to religious activity. Paul raised the question about their attitude of listening and learning to get to the core question of their moral choices of debauchery and unbridled lust. If a father has been so stern and demanding of a son so as to turn him into a rebellious person who embraces bad friends with bad practices, it might suggest how the father, as a leader, would drive people away from the beauty of holiness into choosing a life in lustful squalor.

This explanation of Titus 1:6 becomes even more convincing when studied against the backdrop of Proverbs. The father in the book of wisdom urges the son to be eager to listen to instruction and to prize knowledge and wisdom above all treasures. The writer repeatedly emphasized that heeding to instruction saves one from untold moral failures. Titus 1:6 is a one-sentence commentary on the Book of Proverbs. Ephesians 6:1 is the second verse to the parenting song as it urges:

Children, obey your parents [literally “listen humbly”] . . . “Honor your father and mother [literally “give value to what they teach”] . . . that it may go well with you and that you will live long on the earth” (cf. Deuteronomy 5:16).

Overly emphasizing the doctrine of the statement “*faithful children*” may have caused Christians to miss the central thrust

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of the passage and deprived the Church of many capable leaders. Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus show how good parenting translates into good leadership.

In this section of study on the family the messages that should be remembered are:

- A leader must be developing a marital relationship in which his wife is secure in the mature love of her husband.
- A leader must have children who enjoy a secure relation with their father, expressing high regard for him, having learned from him self-discipline in decision making and morality.

Moral Maturity

As men develop toward leadership they must become exemplary in the ethical and relational qualities that will determine the strength of their influence on others. In 1 Timothy 3 there are nine relational traits. In Titus 1 there are eleven such traits. The two accounts differ only in several specific traits. Together the two accounts give at least ten distinct qualities to measure the readiness of a prospective leader. Perhaps the diversity of traits suggests not just different conditions in the churches in Europe and Asia but that Paul was simply emphasizing how important it is that leaders be mature, exemplary Christians. It is obvious that neither of these two accounts on Church leadership nor any other one listing of virtues contains all the desirable qualities of Christian maturity (for example, 1 Corinthians 13 does not cite all the qualities of love; Galatians 5 does not exhaust all the desired results of the work of the Holy Spirit; Ephesians 4 does not include all the communication principles.) However, both accounts emphasize the demand for mature, competent men in church leadership. Paul's listings of ethical/relational traits, when writing to Timothy and Titus were:

- “**Temperate**” describes a person who is calm, wise, cautious, vigilant. Such a person is not extreme in anything. A church served by temperate elders can be confident that every decision, every new commitment, and every call for service has been well considered with full attention given to all considerations.
- “**Sober**” (KJV) describes one who is serious and under control. Such a person can enjoy the moment with humor and laughter but knows when to be serious. In a stressful situation he understands the gravity of the matter and stays in control of himself and of the situation. Such elders can contain conflict from spreading and can lessen the degree of hurt in volatile situations that could explode.
- “**Of Good Behaviour**” (KJV) speaks of one who is organized, orderly, and well disciplined. He is predictable. Elders with this quality can be counted on to be orderly in behavior and in decision making.
- “**Hospitable**” pictures one who enjoys helping the needy, who understands the plight of traveling strangers, who is unselfish and generous in helping resolve the difficulties of others. Hospitable elders lead a church in reaching out to those in need, without regard to the human barriers of race, status, gender, or circumstance.
- “**Not Given to Wine**” (KJV) (literally “not sitting long at his cup”) extols the virtue of personal, self-control, and resisting enslavement. Possibly, the New Testament prohibition of addiction to wine in a wine drinking society could authorize the Church to speak against addiction in any area of life: money, power, work, play, passions, even religion. Biblical elders are not slaves to anything or anyone in such ways that they lose the freedom and balance to set Kingdom priorities in their lives.
- “**No Striker**” (KJV) marks a man who is not contentious, quarrelsome, or hurtful in his treatment of others. By neither

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speech, manipulation, nor intimidation would a man of God force an action or decision on others. Prospective elders who would lead out of such a low esteem of others as to hurt them to achieve his own purposes are precluded by this caution.

- “**Gentle**” applauds one who is fair, reasonable, not unduly rigorous, or demanding. Such a man is not quick to accuse or harsh in judgments, but kindly treats people out of mutual respect and belief in what the person can become in Christ.
- “**Not a Brawler**” (KJV) marks one who, while not hurtful of others as the striker, is not always finding a provocation to quarrel. A brawler is easily offended, takes things out of context, takes everything personally, and is quick to be defensive, and even lashes out at the perceived attacker. It is clear that, as an elder, such a man could never be easily entreated or even constructively critiqued. He would not easily be open to new ideas if the suggestion could be interpreted as a negative criticism of him.
- “**Not Covetous**” (KJV) (literally not fond of or having a liking of silver) commends one who is free from greed and free to work for the good of others, not motivated by the sinful desire of the “goods” of others. A covetous man, once in the leadership of the church, would “guard” the church budget and bank account and would lead the church away from many good works. Paul further precludes a covetous man from being in the leadership of the church in saying to Titus that an elder must be “*one who loves what is good*” (Titus 1:8).
- “**Holy**” (Titus 1:8) is a profound and comprehensive description of a complete man. On the surface it describes a morally sound person. More deeply it speaks of one who has been intentionally set apart for a specific purpose. Deeper still, especially when applied to God, the term speaks of being incomparably above, superlatively distinct, uniquely

different, complete in all of His traits. While holiness is God's essential nature, all of His men are yielding to the Spirit to become holy as God is holy (cf. 1 Peter 1:14–15). A prospective elder is one who is devoted to being complete or mature in all the traits that enhance his commitment to be set apart for the high calling to leadership.

Further, in Titus 1, Paul summarizes the traits mentioned in 1 Timothy 3 by saying that a prospective leader must be sober-minded, just, and self-controlled. These relational qualities enhance one's leadership opportunities to gain the respect and co-labor of fellow Christians. Most of the problems in leadership spring from deficiencies in these relational qualities. Strong churches have developed, selected, and appointed leaders who are individually mature in each and all these qualities.

Church Leadership

In addition to a man's family relations and personal morality, there are two qualities every prospective leader must achieve:

- “*Apt to teach*” (KJV) requires one to have discovered and developed his potential as a teacher. The major biblical references to a spiritual leader embrace the teaching aspect of leadership:
 - ▶ The word “*elder*” (*presbuteros*) emphasizes that wisdom is to be used in counseling which is instruction at its most personal.
 - ▶ The word “*overseer*” (*episkopos*) emphasizes mentoring or individualized instruction.
 - ▶ The word “*ruler*” (*proistami*) emphasizes modeling, a powerful form of instruction, and standing before others to lead, to protect, to teach.

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- The word “*shepherd*” (*poimen*) emphasizes feeding, sustaining, guiding, protecting.

In the Ephesian letter, Paul characterized the elders as ones who had been charged by Christ “. . . *to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up*” (Ephesians 4:11–12). Inept teaching and training members in ministry at the eldership level betray superficial biblical knowledge and the lack of value being placed on instruction. Rightly, the pastoral, leadership system wherein congregational instruction is focused in one man, has been shown to be in error. Rejecting it in principle but practicing it in fact is worse. Some churches practice the error in fact to the extent that their elders are not able teachers of the Word, leaving the minister as the “*pastor*” who feeds the flock and trains the saints for ministry.

- “***Not a novice***” (KJV) (literally not a recently planted tree) emphasizes here not simply young or old in years, but in maturity. A recently planted tree is not yet fruitful, it needs to be supported to grow straight and tall and to be able to stand erect in a storm. It cannot give a haven to birds in its tender branches or comforting shade by its leaves. Likewise, time is required for men to become giants in the forest of trees. Paul cautioned the Church not to thrust men into prime leadership too early. That is, to make sure the prospective leader has demonstrated a deep-rooted faith and fruitfulness of mature growth. The results would be disastrous, resulting in the pride that serves the devil’s designs.

Relations in the Community

The Church is not a self-serving or a clannish fellowship. She is not to operate in a vacuum. She is the “*salt of the earth . . . the light of the world*” (Matthew 5:13–14). The Church and message are intended to be seen, heard, and examined in

the world and by the world (cf. Ephesians 3:10–11). Therefore, her leaders are required to be attractive and convincing in their relations in the community. They display before the world what Christ does in the lives of His followers. By looking at the elders of a local church the citizens in the community can find hope for becoming moral, hope for building strong marriages and families, and hope for becoming respected by one's peers. Nothing is so contradictory and repellent to the world than for spiritual leaders failing to live what is being regularly taught to others. Any hint of religious hypocrisy closes the door to serious inquiry. How a man is regarded in the community at the grocery store, pharmacy, gas station, participating in community causes, transacting business, and other interactions will determine how effectively he can lead a church to penetrate that community with the Gospel.

Preview of the Next Chapter: Leader Strong Churches Understand Leaders Must Grow a Church

The next chapter will introduce a fifth characteristic that is common among churches who are strong in leadership. Leaders often get caught up in the excitement of building facilities, developing huge budgets, assembling a large ministry staff, or staging attractive and entertaining programs and forget that growing members in the likeness of the Savior to do the work of God is their major focus. This coming study will bring the focus back on helping the members grow to the stature of the Christ.

Leader Strong Churches Understand Leaders Must Grow a Church

The Church can joyfully acknowledge that only God working with His Holy Spirit through the power of the Word actually gives growth to every endeavor in the name of Christ. Then, after acknowledging the primary source of Church growth, Christians can say that leaders are appointed and confirmed by God to grow churches. Paul affirmed the place of shepherds and evangelists in God's scheme for the local church. Comparing the New International Version with the King James Version, notice what Paul said in Ephesians 4:11–13:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (NIV).

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge

of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (KJV).

When speaking of the growth assignment to leaders in the local church, Paul pinpointed the place and purpose of shepherds in their shared work with evangelists. They are assigned the specific work of equipping the saints in view of results in five, important Church growth areas. Each assignment is introduced by the Greek word, *eis*, “unto/for” (in view of, in the direction of) to suggest that it is an ongoing work as new members are coming into the fellowship. There is much for every member to learn.

- “*Works of service*” (4:12): A healthy, functioning church has as many opportunities to minister as there are different ministry gifts assigned to the many members. It is the assignment of the shepherds to help each member discover, develop, and employ the specific, ministry gifts God has given. It is the joy of shepherds to empower, guide, and assemble the resources to accomplish the ministries of the church. “*The works of service*” would include the ministry of preaching/teaching the Word to the lost, community outreach in doing good to all men, and responding to the needs of the saints.
- “*So that the body of Christ may be built up*” (4:12): Every church has much work to do to assure that every member is functioning adequately in the basic, Christian traits: coping with stress, winning over anxiety, freely serving others, being open and transparent, sensitive, unselfish, confident in the LORD, forgiving, and self-disciplined. A wounded church cannot fight long or well or be fully devoted to its assignments. Shepherds must be decidedly concerned about the health and strength of the church to achieve its mandate in the world.

- “Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God” (4:13): “Unity in the faith” is an unfailing partner with “the knowledge of the Son of God.” Knowing this, shepherds must keep educational initiatives in motion that are steadily deepening the relationship with God and sharpening obedience to His teachings (cf. Matthew 28:19–20). For unity to prevail within a church there must be systematic and reproducible truths being consistently taught in every initiative of the congregation.
- “Become mature” (4:13): Shepherds are guided by the expectancy that all of their work will result in the members becoming fully grown and fruitful. Like a mature tree, the members are to produce after their own kind. They are to produce other Christians who become mature and fruitful in kind (cf. 2 Timothy 2:2).
- “Attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (4:13): With Christ as the ultimate measure of moral and spiritual qualities, all Christians are guided by the shepherds to reach the highest levels of spirituality as life and opportunity allows. Such growth stretches one beyond his comfort zones, brings him to face challenges bigger than himself, and takes him deeper and further than anything he has known. What one becomes when the Spirit has formed Christlike character within him makes him unrecognizable from his former self. He is a “new creature,” having experienced reversal and renewal and waiting for resurrection and glorification (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17). By committing to the values and world view of Jesus and submitting to His servant ministry, the believer takes on the divine nature (cf. 2 Peter 1:4).⁶

⁶. The Ephesians 4:11–13 paragraphs are taken from the book “Shepherds Among the Sheep” by Truman Scott.

Church Growth Areas

The growth needs of the Church are not optional niceties or just good when possible. They are urgent necessities whose accomplishment is laid at the feet of the shepherds (cf. Ephesians 4:14ff). The consequences of failure leave new converts as unfed infants and expose the whole church to troubling teachings and uncertainty. The risk of being swept away in doctrinal error and deception is very real, but the rewards of diligent and faithful shepherds doing their jobs are endless and joyful.

Many insist that Church growth is most affected by programs or novel, break through ideas. Multiple books, videos, and seminars have been developed to showcase these exciting, Church growth results. However, whatever the method, there are some basic qualities that are essential to spur growth as individuals and as groups. Church leaders would do well gaining the knowledge and skill to guide members through these growth experiences. The following discussion emphasizes six, growth experiences through which elders must lead the congregation: wholeness, ministry giftedness, healing through forgiveness, Bible knowledge, building marriages, and excelling in prayer. All of these must be focused in Christ and for the growth of His Church.

Membership Wholeness

Imagine watching an army that was well-equipped, well trained, battle seasoned, and victory committed marching to battle. All who were watching would anticipate a resounding victory. With a closer look, if the spectators saw that 60–70 % of the soldiers and 45–50% of the officers were critically wounded, they would be reluctant to predict a victory. Why? Because they know that wounded men, despite their commitment, cannot fight long, or well, or up to their potential

in better times. This picture describes the LORD's militant, but wounded Church. One half (50%) of her leaders and two thirds (66%) of her members are wounded in at least two out of nine growth areas in their spiritual life.

Paul made membership wholeness a major aim in his ministry. He said, "*We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ*" (Colossians 1:28). Paul made it his aim to present every man complete in Christ Jesus. Church leaders must teach sound doctrine in respect to the monumental truths of the Scriptures. It is equally important to help the members become whole in their life traits. Among the churches of Christ, elders must do a more efficient work in helping members identify needed growth areas, teaching them how to become free of the obstacles to growth and free to become all God designed them to be. Members need to be motivated to pursue wholeness in their lives. With such maturity churches would experience phenomenal growth. There would be greater unity, more passion in soul winning, more fervency in worship, more depth in Bible study, more efficient management of conflict, and more brotherly love. Wounded members can never reach their potential in maturity or in fruitfulness.

With some training and careful observation, needed growth areas can be identified in most members. A wide selection of personality inventories has been published that expedite and more accurately identify needed growth areas. Once an inventory of growth needs is made, teaching or therapy can begin to promote growth with corresponding, life-management skills. For example, biblical guidelines can be researched and provided on how to drive anxiety, selfishness, and resentment from one's life. Light from God's Word can be brought to shine on becoming calm in the midst of storms, serving even difficult people, being open in getting close to people, caring and understanding the plight of others, being bold and assertive in

doing good, and self-disciplined in doing the work of the LORD as a mature Christian.

Capable teachers trained in wholeness needs can be invited to hold seminars or several qualified persons can be engaged to speak in area lectureships. There is a growing library of books, video, and study programs to help both leaders and members to grow in maturity. Christian colleges are developing Internet programs that include courses on Christian counseling and spiritual living. Most preachers are very capable to teach the Christian virtues that help people to be whole. More resources are available than at any other time. The real issue is if leaders will make membership wholeness a priority concern. Beyond knowing the “*fruit of the Spirit*” (Galatians 5:22–23), elders must help members accurately identify their areas of needed growth, help them remove the obstacles, and replace the causative problems with life management skills leading to a mature, spiritual life that is rich and fruitful. **Churches grow only and if members are growing in spiritual maturity, becoming whole in Christ.**

Membership Potential

In the typical congregation, 15% of the “active” members make things happen and give 90% of the financial resources while the other 85% are largely spectators. That number would include those who might be doing something out of the mainstream and those who are on the margins who have little awareness or interest of what is happening. Being so little involved in the planned programs of the church, some of the members are critical spectators and frequently distract the leaders and productive members from doing the pressing work that needs to be done. If they did not come to the assembly, little other than the attendance number would be impacted.

Beyond reasons of age, sickness, or other constraints beyond their control, why do many members contribute so little

energy to the ministry fruitfulness of the congregation? Is it more a question of little faith, shallow commitment, being too busy in material and mundane things? What shall leaders do? Preach to them more about the sinfulness of being unfruitful and the joys of the harvest? Tell them to go elsewhere where they might become more active and the church would be able to devote its attention to those who really want to grow and serve? Continue to be frustrated but tolerant of their marginal membership? Abdicate the shepherd's responsibility to patiently and tenderly care for the sheep? **What can a church and its leaders do?**

- **Rethink the whole scene:** Inactive members are precious souls for whom Christ died even as he died for those who are more active and productive. Despite their lethargy and contradictory life, they have a redeemed place in the LORD's family just as those others who have been actively growing.
- **Rethink the structure:** Churches have largely relied almost fully on Bible classes, sermons, and occasional seminars to inform and motivate members in being active servants of the LORD. Have church leaders thought "outside the box" to see if there are other biblical and effective ways by which members might be brought into the mainstream of a growing church?

There is one, dominant answer! A great resource has long been neglected. It is like water going unused out to sea, like sun rays being unharnessed, and like atomic energy lying dormant for millenniums. Churches have made anemic use of one of the greatest powers residing in the Church. What would you think if the following, new results occurred in a congregation?

- Greater numbers of members would be starting new ministries.

- ▶ Greater distinction would be seen between right and wrong.
- ▶ There would be a quintupling of people taught and converted.
- ▶ More people would be nurturing others.
- ▶ More helpers would be ready for “*every good work.*”
- ▶ More skilled, practical teachers would instruct the members.
- ▶ There would be greater depth in Bible studies.
- ▶ There would be an increased number of benefactors.
- ▶ Ministries would be more efficiently organized and administered.
- ▶ Greater numbers of trained people would be reaching out to the needy.
- ▶ There would be more people available to lead in the global conquest.

Some would say that this would be something just short of a miracle in these times. How can this “miracle” be performed?

The neglected resources are the Ministry Gifts God gives in His own time. Some say these come at birth as a natural gift that becomes a Kingdom assignment on conversion or some say the Gifts come at conversion and are included in the “*gift of the Holy Spirit*” in Act 2:38.

God gives Kingdom assignments to members. In Romans 12:6–8 and Ephesians 4:11–12, Paul affirmed that believers are gifted persons. The individual gifts differ, being designed to meet specific needs in the church and in the mission of the Church in the world. They are to be discovered, developed, and employed for the growth of the Body. The **naming of spiritual gifts** or Kingdom assignments would include a composite listing of the ministry gifts in Romans 12:6–8 and Ephesians 4:11–12, guiding members in knowing the gifts God has given to His Church:

- The gift of **evangelism** — one has a passion to let everyone know about the unique blessings in Christ.
- The gift of **rebuke** — one has the courage and candor to confront those in error in the spirit of a prophet who confronted on God's behalf.
- The gift of **scholarly instruction** — one is drawn to extensively research a subject and share the findings.
- The gift of **practical instruction** and **encouragement** — one organizes a body of knowledge and shares it with others, encouraging them to make it real in their lives.
- The gift of **shepherding** — one cares for the needs of others through instruction, counsel, guidance, and protection.
- The gift of **mercy** — one is able to feel and understand the deeper needs of others and help bring relief and healing of the crippling concerns.
- The gift of **service** — one is alert to the material needs of others and sacrificially bows in humble service to do for others what they can hardly do for themselves.
- The gift of **giving** — one is insightful in seeing unmet challenges and needs and sacrificially and unselfishly finds amazing ways to provide resources.
- The gift of **administration** — one is visionary in seeing a challenge, is insightful in skillfully organizing a solution, and gathers the people, materials, and financial resources to accomplish the task.
- The gift of **hospitality** — one is a lover of people and thrills at meeting needs, bringing people together, and making good use of God's material resources (cf. 1 Peter 4:10).

The Discovery of Ministry Gifts: Much can be known about what gifts are given to which members by observing ministries in which they clearly excel. They greatly enjoy doing something for others, they do it with a sense of fulfillment, they

are fruitful and continue to do the work over extended periods. There have been questionnaires that have been developed in the last few decades that accelerate and improve the accuracy in identifying one's ministry giftedness. Some care must be taken by leaders to use a questionnaire which serves the congregation best. Some questionnaires include the charismatic gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 that no longer apply to the present day Church. Other questionnaires are task-oriented. The one that best avoids any excesses and is more biblical has been produced by Team Ministry. One can purchase group packets to administer the questionnaire manually or individually go on-line and complete 108 questions and get a free printout of the resultant profile and explanation. For either need, one can access the website at: www.teamministry.com. On this profile there are nine ministry gifts.

The Development of Ministry Gifts: Most people will have three primary, three secondary, and three tertiary gifts. To be sure, some time should be spent in gaining the knowledge and skills in all nine gifts. However, particular time and energy on the long term must be devoted to the three (sometimes four) primary gifts. These three gifts are God's leading assignments in ministry for each person. Developing these three gifts to the maximum quality will yield the richest results over a longer period of time, costing less energy and time to use them effectively. A growing library of books on Ministry Giftedness needs to be purchased and made available to members. Classes to teach the ministry in which each gift is used need to be scheduled. Learning and serving projects need to be developed to give each gifted person the opportunity to develop and employ the primary gifts. Funds need to be budgeted to underwrite the cost of increased, ministry activities.

The Employment of Ministry Gifts: Being given a ministry gift, even given the opportunity to develop the gift, and not employing it in the growth of the Body for which it was

given would be irresponsible stewardship. The statement of Jesus, “*. . . From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked*” (Luke 12:48) rings through the centuries and would clearly include ministry gifts that lie dormant and unused for the right purposes. Leaders need to plan church efforts on the basis of knowing the giftedness of each member and encourage each gifted member to use his/her gifts in the growth of the church.

A Fellowship of Peace

One of the richest and most pressing needs for growth is in conflict management and reconciliation. More churches have divided and brotherly friends have abandoned one another because they did not know how to work through conflict. Learning to be peacemakers is one of the greatest works of leadership in any church. Leaders are authorized to speak of the signal importance of peacemaking because of the statement of Jesus in the Beatitudes: “*Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God*” (Matthew 5:9) The word translated “*peacemakers*” describes one who brings harmony as when the many instruments in an orchestra are harmonized or balanced as in bringing two extremes into agreement. One of the best investments of finances by church leaders would be to schedule a Peacemaking Seminar.

Church Members Need to Know: Church leaders must make sure the cancer of division is not allowed to take root in the heart of any member. Seven things should be understood by every member:

- Not every offense is worth attention and certainly most are not worth a disruption of friendship or fellowship.

- Members must learn, even before a conflict threatens, to be prepared to quickly confess a wrong, control anger, and begin the process of reconciliation through forgiveness.
- Members must be trained to detect the wrong responses to conflict and hastily reject them, replacing them with healthy, efficient responses.
- Settling losses of material means or of reputation needs to take place only after reconciliation has been mutually affirmed.
- Prolonged, unresolved conflicts may require members to humbly invite other skilled persons to intervene to offer more objective mediation and even arbitration.
- The refusal to be reconciled is a sin, subject to church discipline and disapproval of God. Through unresolved conflict the things most highly regarded by God are sacrificed: fraternal love, unity of the Church, purpose of the Church, and the overshadowing message of the Gospel.
- Developing a culture of peace is imperative in the Church so that it can be all that God desired for His people.

Peacemaking is not a weak act of compromise or tolerating everything to achieve peace at any price. Peacemaking is a healthy response to conflict in view of those in conflict exercising the greatest virtues of the Christian faith: confession, forgiveness, fraternal love. Research should be done to identify and invite a select group or a lecturer who specializes in teaching the church how to manage conflict at every level of family and church life.

A Healed Fellowship

A healed fellowship would be a church that is whole in all of its traits mentioned previously. The healing which is referred to here is specifically recovering from unhealed hurts. A full 65% of adults have unresolved hurts. These hurts have come

from mishandling the hurts during the course of their lives. Or, more clearly put, they have not learned how to manage their anger and turn the hurt emotions away from growing resentments to forgiveness and reconciliation. Unknown to them, what was controllable anger almost imperceptibly becomes a venomous threat to their relationships and physical and emotional health. Church growth becomes compromised and, in some cases, precluded when members are full of unresolved and harbored hurts. They become defensive when the unhealed area is threatened, even if done innocently by someone. When the old bruises are threatened, people with unhealed hurts will use whatever defense mechanism they have found effective to avoid being hurt again. Many defenses can be hurtful to relationships. The following is an eight-step program of forgiveness:

- Choose to be **honest**, to acknowledge hurt and anger.
- Choose to make a **healthy response**. Rather than repress or explode, give direction and control to hurt emotions.
- Choose to **confront the hurt**, to verify if it is real or perceived, if it is important, if it is current or in the past.
- Choose to **understand** the offender. Put the significant hurts in context that have been verified. Be willing to ask the “why” questions.
- Choose to **desire the best** for the offender. Practice the “Calvary” choice on behalf of the offender. Practice love.
- Choose to **forgive the offense**. Stand at the side of the offender as a defense attorney and plead the case for clemency.
- Choose to **confirm the forgiveness** in word and in deed. Decide to be a servant and assume some responsibility in the rehabilitation of the offender.
- Choose to **maintain vigilance and discipline** in anger management from future hurts. Practice the preceding

principles each time new hurts occur (cf. Spiritual Living for Ministers by Truman Scott for a fuller treatment of these steps).

Every leader must know that an unforgiving member or church cannot convincingly proclaim the message of forgiveness of a forgiving God. In fact, Jesus conditioned God's forgiveness upon man's forgiveness of others (cf. Matthew 6:15). Salvation for self and salvation for the lost world weigh heavily on the virtue and ability to forgive. Paul confirmed that Christians are to "*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you*" (Ephesians 4:32). How can one have a full relationship with a forgiving God when he or she refuses to forgive others?

A Bible Knowing Church

The ancient declaration in Hosea 4:6, "*My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge*" is as modern as video conferencing or "iPod" communications. Its abiding truth keeps pace with each turning of a modern page. Jesus pronounced "*the truth*" as a key to freedom (cf. John 8:32). Nothing good, lasting, or strong comes out of ignorance. A Bible-knowing member or congregation is the minimum, beginning point of God's earthly plan for humanity and His heavenly plan for saints. Paul emphasized the singular need of knowledge when writing to the Colossians: ". . . *We have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding*" (Colossians 1:9). Paul saw biblical knowledge still imperative for local leaders of the church as seen in his admonition to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:32: ". . . *I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*"

In every church much planning and energy are devoted to instructing the church. Perhaps, churches have done more and better in this area of church growth than in any other area. Yet, Bible knowledge is in serious decline across the land. In many places there is an encroaching Bible illiteracy. The area of most serious decline is in individual, systematic Bible study. Don Huddleston developed an approach to Bible study in his mission work in the Philippines. The program aims at learning the content of the 260 chapters of the New Testament. It consists of the following aspects:

- **Getting Ready:**

- Buy 300, 3 X 5 index cards, 27 index tabs (or divider cards) and a box (a good size would be a recipe box).
- Write the name of each of the 27 New Testament books on the index tabs.
- Place the index cards in the box after each of the 27 index tabs according to the number of chapters in each book (Matthew, 28 cards; Mark, 16 cards, and so on). Write the chapter number at the upper right or left corner of each card.
- Choose a reading New Testament that has comfortably large print and has each chapter divided into sub-topics.

Now, you are ready to start a marvelous acquisition of life serving Bible knowledge.

- **Start Learning:**

- Read ten chapters each day for seven days, Monday–Sunday, beginning in Matthew.
- Monday: Read to enjoy the content flow of the ten chapters.
- Tuesday: Read the ten chapters again and begin, writing the chapter sub-topics listed in your Bible on each of the ten

cards (for example Matthew 1 has these sub-topics: Genealogy of Jesus Christ, Announcement and Birth of Jesus, and so on).

- ▶ Wednesday–Thursday–Friday: Read the ten chapters each day and memorize the sub-topics in each chapter.
 - ▶ Saturday: Read the ten chapters and, with a closed Bible, test yourself in recalling the contents of each chapter.
 - ▶ Sunday: Read the ten chapters and praise God for the new found beauty of Scripture.
-
- **Repeat** the first week's schedule, ten chapters at a time, for twenty-five more weeks. You will acquire a marvelous knowledge of 260 chapters in the New Testament. Kept fresh by review and practical use one will have instant recall of the Apostolic Word. One can repeat this program every few years. The first time either through the New Testament or in subsequent readings, one may add to the chapter cards the following:
 - ▶ Write on the back of the cards and memorize the names of people and places mentioned in each chapter.
 - ▶ Write on the back of the cards and memorize one or more memory verses from each chapter.
 - ▶ Write on the back of the cards and memorize a principle doctrine in each chapter.

In the initial twenty-six weeks and in subsequent reviews in mastering the structural content of the 260 New Testament chapters one will delight in plumbing the depths of the message in each chapter of each book. Later, one may want to apply the same diligence and approach to a mastery of the Old Testament, a two to three year commitment. This base of knowledge can be built on with great profit. Without this knowledge a member will be limited in serving by his

immature faith. Paul penned Romans 10:17 more than 2,000 years ago declaring, “. . . *faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.*”

Other systematic study plans are available to lead the believer into greater, spiritual depths such as a daily reading of the Bible throughout the year. The more leaders can encourage members to live in the Word, the more frequently they will have a direct confrontation with Christ.

Marriage Excellence

Churches with many strained or fragmented marriages are hurting churches, distracted by the marital pain from fulfilling God’s purposes. Their energy is consumed, their time is siphoned off from ministry and growth purposes, and many are left with debilitating guilt, resentment, and financial burdens. God has announced His intentions that marriages be right, mature, and holy. The leadership qualities defined in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 require local leaders to model healthy marital relationships and to instruct couples in marital development. The mature sisters of Titus 2 (certainly including elders’ wives) are to teach young wives to love their husbands. The Holy Spirit has left Christians with abundant instruction in the Word on building a healthy, fulfilling marriage (cf. Chapter Four, Home Relations — Being a Model Husband).

Over the last two decades, more than ever, there has been a substantial, Christian oriented library of books, audio and video programs, seminars, family conferences, and congregational teaching series to assist couples and leaders in their work of developing marriages. Well trained and trustworthy, Christian counselors are on the increase to provide premarital and marital counseling. There is little reason why couples and leaders cannot find and avail themselves of

trustworthy assistance in building and enriching marriages. Leaders need to help marital partners to excel in the following, basic areas:

- Learning about marriage from God's perspective by reading the foundation principles in Genesis 1–2, God's view of a husband's priorities in Hosea 2:19–20, and learning the apostolic teaching on marriage in Ephesians 5, Colossians 3, and 1 Peter 3.
- Being skilled in communication, parenting, sexual intimacy, money and time management, and in conflict resolution.
- Identifying the inviting challenges to make a home a place wherein God is honored, children are focused and submitted in lifelong service to God.
- There are many good things to do in building a church. There are some that are essential and of high priority. The development of godly marriages is one of the absolutes in Church growth. Without good homes there will eventually be a scarcity of leaders, inspiring preaching, Bible teaching, or evangelistic outreach.

Covenant Praying

A leader strong church is a praying church. Her leaders are men of fervent prayer. Her people are learning to view the whole panorama of prayer. They understand:

- Prayer and faithfulness — knowing what prayer is from God's view, what it is designed to do, and how it relates to God's power.
- Prayer and forethought — knowing the importance of preparation in the Word and in life before entering God's temple of prayer.

- Prayer and frequency — knowing the value of regular, periodic prayer that often leads one into God's presence.
- Prayer and fervency — knowing that passion and conviction go together.
- Prayer and fasting — knowing that all great persons of prayer understood the self-discipline and the profit of fasting accompanying their prayers.
- Prayer and fullness — knowing that a full, prayer life involves eight pathways: adoration of God's essential nature, praise for His marvelous works, thanksgiving for His gracious gifts, confession of one's need for Him and for His forgiveness, commitment of oneself to His will and purposes, petition for the great needs of the Kingdom, intercession for others, and communion with God through meditation and reading of Scripture.
- Prayer and fraternity — knowing that fellowship in prayer with other believers is a vital part of God's rich legacy enjoyed in prayer.
- Prayer and futurity — knowing that a believer prays believing and expecting that in the future God will answer his prayers as best serves His purposes.
- Prayer and fruitfulness — knowing that good will come from prayer, not that there is power in man's prayer, but that there is power in the One who hears men pray and He powerfully responds.
- Prayer and festivity — knowing there is a time of celebration when prayers have been answered to the glory of God and for the blessings to men.

These ten aspects in the panorama of prayer provide an agenda for teaching the members to pray, especially **prayer and fullness** with its eight pathways of prayer. Teaching believers to pray gives them the most direct access to the throne

room of heaven where one can be empowered by a God who enjoys communion with His creation.

Every leader should have the evidence of prayer in his own life, from the callouses on his knees to a gleam of heaven in his eye; from a life of sweetness and serenity to a life of militancy and confirmed conviction and courage. Being a person of prayer, he can inflame others with the desire to be taught to pray. A leader needs to push most things down a notch on his priority list to reserve a treasured place for prayer. If one is too busy even in the business of the King to reserve the best of his time for communion with the King, then he is too busy in things of lesser value.

**Preview of the Next Chapter:
Leader Strong Churches Understand
There Must Be a Mature Response by
Members to the Leadership**

When there are problems in a congregation, frequently the elders are criticized. However, even more frequently, it must be said that the sources of many problems result from members acting immaturely in respect to elders. God holds both members and leaders responsible and accountable for the lack of growth in a church. This coming study will focus on what members need to learn to become mature in their responses to congregational leaders.

Leader Strong Churches Understand There Must Be a Mature Response by Members to the Leadership

A study on the responsibilities of spiritual leaders is incomplete without pointed attention being given to the responsibilities of the members to be mature in their relationship with the appointed leaders. Christians all desire to see efficient and fruitful leaders in every local church. The lack of growth in a congregation is sometimes more a question of membership maturity than leadership function. This is evident for several reasons:

- **A congregation determines the substance of leadership.** To a great extent leaders are what they have been trained to be. They look like the church that produced them. They mirror much of the church that has taught them. Leaders are and do much of what the church has committed itself to be and to accomplish. Any leader, in most congregations, represents a substantial membership investment. They reflect the best the congregation possesses. Parents, Bible school teachers, youth ministers, pulpit ministers, elders, mates, relatives, and many more have devoted much effort influencing such a one to make the right choices over a lifetime to become a leader. Where there is a definite and positive program to train leaders, starting very early, there

will be a continuing number of good leaders coming to the front.

- **A congregation determines the number and quality of future leaders by its spirit and attitude.** Most members, early in their Christian life, determine the extent to which they will prepare for and participate in leadership roles. Children, recent converts, and young adults are greatly encouraged to pursue ministry activities and leadership maturity in a congregation where leaders are esteemed and treated well. If a congregation struggles with a poverty of leaders, the first place to look is at the congregational history in the treatment of its own appointed leaders. Fewer young men will aspire to serve as leaders in a church that is critical, resistant, doubtful, and punitive of its leaders. Fewer young women will be as quick to encourage their young husbands to prepare for leadership if they see how much negative stress many members of the congregation place on the leaders and their families. The number and quality of those in congregational leadership rise in direct proportion to the mature regard, warm affection, and cooperativeness of the congregation.
- **A congregation determines the effectiveness of appointed leaders.** Leaders are vastly important to the growth of a congregation, but they are lesser able to do what they want to do and can do without mature, congregational support. It is nearly impossible to lead an unwilling, critical, and resistant people. It is difficult to lead even if one accepted leadership responsibilities because he sees a great need, is convicted of the good to be done, feels a deep, personal sense of stewardship, or recognizes the will of God in his own regard. Encouraged by such highly motivated leaders a congregation can change. However, if the church does not improve and persists in its recurring patterns of resisting leadership, the leaders most frequently fall in despair and

defeat. Many even take on themselves the guilt for the failures. Many well intentioned and reasonably competent leaders, whether elders, evangelists, Bible school teachers, youth workers, or other leadership roles, have given up because of lack of support and harsh criticism from resistant members. Usually the resistance comes from the same sources regardless of whom the leaders are or what they propose.

Leader strong churches know how incredibly important the membership response to leaders is. They understand how lifted up and strengthened the leaders are when they serve with men and women who know God's will for them in their relationship with the church leaders. The members have searched the Word to know what they can do to provide a mature, healthy environment where leaders can be developed, selected, and sustained.

A Healthy, Congregational Environment

A healthy, congregational environment for leadership development and fruitful co-labor is best promoted by a knowledge of and submission to God's will. Some members might be surprised to know that God has spoken so much and so forcefully to members about their responses to leaders. God has long spoken to spiritual leaders about their responsibilities and accountabilities. However, there is a second verse in which God has spoken to members and holds them fully accountable. Note a summary of some of the major statements of God to members:

» 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13:

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and

admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves (KJV).

Paul spoke to the Thessalonian church with its recently appointed elders by identifying the specific persons who were to be singled out for their attention: “*Now we ask you, brothers, to respect . . .*

- *those who work hard among you . . .*
- *those . . . who are over you in the Lord and . . .*
- *those . . . who admonish you.”*

All three descriptions are tied grammatically in the context to refer to the same group who work unselfishly, who direct the affairs of the church, and who teach and encourage the members. The combination of these three activities, supported by other leadership scriptures, best describes the activities of elders of the church. Then, Paul proceeded to instruct the members how to be mature in responding to their leaders:

- “*. . . know them . . .*” — The word “*know*” from the King James Version suggests intimate knowledge gained only in a close relationship. It would require understanding the thoughts, deeper needs, and concerns of the leaders. The word implies taking interest in and caring for someone. In this context the word is frequently translated “*respect*.” One cannot respect another without making every effort to gain the understanding and appreciation of the world of each leader. When members are genuine in their concern for their leaders and wanting to understand their concerns, then, all the harsh criticism and hasty judgments are greatly lessened or precluded. It

is amazing how hurtful criticisms of leaders lose their strength when genuine, concerned understanding grows.

- “. . . *esteem them very highly in love . . .*” (literally: “most exceedingly”) — Paul leaves no doubt that members are to look for the best in their leaders and shower the highest and most profuse affection on them. Love is wanting the best to happen to the beloved. Members are to exhaust their resources to assure that only the best will happen to leaders in their ministry of leadership.
- Whereas, the “*intimate concern/know them*” is tied to the person, “*esteem them very highly in love*” is related to their leadership work. Thus, both as regards to leaders as individuals and as a working group, members are to develop a responsible attitude and relation with each and all of the congregational leaders.
- No wonder Paul concluded this section with the exhortation “*And be at peace among yourselves.*” Such a membership attitude and practice contribute heavily to peace in the congregation. Perhaps, Paul’s statement in 1 Thessalonians 5:14 of “. . . *warn them that are unruly . . .*” (KJV) could refer, in part, to members who superficially know their leaders and who unlovingly discredit their leadership efforts.

» **1 Timothy 5:17–18:**

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.”

Paul taught two levels of membership response to elder-leaders who serve well:

- ▶ “**Honor**”—The word “*honor*” refers to a recognition of value. When elders serve well, the congregation has been placed under obligation to recognize the value of leadership and the individual value of the efficient and skilled elder. Personal and group commendations, supportive co-labor, and encouragement would be basic responses.
- ▶ “**Double Honor**”—Paul goes beyond moral valuing of leaders and verbal affirmation of their work to recognizing the value of their work by monetary support.

In any field of labor the acknowledgment of the value of one’s efforts is regularly stated by material compensation. An employer who asks more and more of a worker but gives little attention to providing material recognition devalues the work being done and the person doing it. A congregation gives honor upon honor, or doubly affirms the value of an elder, in providing material support of his labors. The monetary support of elders, especially those engaged in preaching and teaching, is placed on the same, solid basis as the support of an evangelist (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:14). What is the meaning of employing an evangelist? It means the church sees the value of Gospel preaching and believes the man to be employed is prepared and worthy to be supported. The church honors him because of that recognition. Likewise, when churches provide material support to one or more of its elders, they recognize the value of the spiritual work of shepherding and the worth of the ones supported. Such a church gives honor on honor to its leaders.

» **1 Timothy 5:19–20:**

Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.

Mature members know how to treat their leaders in good times as well as in difficult times. One of the difficult times would be when an elder is thought to have erred. Dealing with leadership failure may be the greatest test of membership maturity.

Paul was specific and even categorical when he said do not listen, do not give audience to unsupported accusations against an elder. Every accusation is to be supported by multiple witnesses. This condition can be fulfilled by following a similar conflict management statement from Jesus in Matthew 18:15. The LORD required individual confrontation, followed by supportive witnesses before a matter of sinful behavior could be carried to others. The continuing statements in 1 Timothy 5:21–22 add a note of urgency and sternness in dealing with premature or unfounded accusations.

The spreading of unfounded complaints, even careless handling of truth, weighs heavily on leadership fruitfulness. Fair treatment, orderly process of complaints, regard for truth, reluctance to spread diminishing or hurtful reports, exhausting every resource to strengthen or correct a brother in leadership are all parts of the fraternal regard every member must exercise toward leaders. Such treatment should be true in regard to every brother, but there are additional reasons why even greater care should be taken for one who leads the church.

» **Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24:**

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith . . . Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you . . . Greet all your leaders and all God's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings.

As indicated by the use of the same Greek word for “leaders” in all three verses, the same group of men is being considered. Consistent with other leadership Scriptures, this group at least included elders, but more specifically describes how members respond to them. Members are instructed to have the following attitude toward them:

- ▶ **Acknowledge** the “*authority*” of the ones who “*have the rule over you*,” the church. This conclusion is consistent with the inherent meaning of the words used to describe the prime leaders in a congregation.
- ▶ **“Remember”** (literally look to them with feeling) calls for members to be sensitive and understanding of leaders. Leaders are still humans in need of encouragement, affirmation, and affection. They get tired, over committed, behind in their work, and make mistakes.
- ▶ **“Consider”** calls for members to carefully examine, not the item by item events of a leader’s past and continuing life, but the outcomes of his lifelong practices and decision making. Every elder, like all men, has made

mistakes and has some continuing deficiencies, but because of a long series of careful actions his marital, parental, moral, and ministry results are exemplary (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1–4). The focus should stay on intent and the outcome of his life and work.

- ▶ “*Imitate their faith.*” With thoughtful regard and admiration of the outcomes of a leader’s life patterns and decisions, the members are to give their best energies to repeating and imitating those principles in their lives. A leader/teacher achieves no greater honor and sense of fulfillment than to see his students walking his walk.
- ▶ “*Obey*” (literally persuade oneself to believe). In the Greek, this verb form is in the middle voice, which is different from the passive voice (actions done to self) or the present voice (actions done by self). Middle voice refers to an action done on oneself or for one’s own benefit. Thus, members are charged here to discipline themselves to believe, to trust, and to honor the control that the congregation has given to the appointed leaders. Members who once voiced their trust in the appointment of a leader must resist the attitude of distrust and desire to retake control or impose their will. Members must determine to look for all the values and qualities in the leaders rather than focus on deficiencies, especially if they are unfounded or of marginal importance.
- ▶ “*Submit*” (literally lay no obstacles). Members are urged to lay no unnecessary burdens on the leaders who make a difficult work even more difficult. Most leaders will state that their work becomes much easier and more pleasant when members are more thoughtful, more ready to work, less demanding and critical.

The writer of Hebrews gives some reasons why members are to build a relationship in which they can “*remember, consider, imitate, obey,*” and “*submit*” to their leaders in Hebrews 13:17: “... *They keep watch over you as men who must give an account . . .*”

- Leaders are serving the members in as much as “*they watch for your souls . . .*” (KJV). Leaders are busy on behalf of the members. Literally, the expression “*watch*” says they are missing their sleep on behalf of the members. Devoted elders often forego human pleasures, family time, and push the limits of good health in order to safeguard the spiritual well-being of the members. Out of appreciation members should build right relations with their elders.
- Leaders are held accountable for the members as indicated in the statement “. . . *as men who must give account . . .*” Members determine if the “time of accounting” will be a joy or a sorrow for their shepherds. Members are encouraged to so live that shepherds can feel the joy of making a positive report concerning their life and ministry. In principle, when most members end their day, usually relaxing in the comfort of their homes, the shepherds stand before the Chief Shepherd to report on the sheep. Heartbreak and joylessness are always present when elders must report a member’s faithlessness. Who knows how many elders have turned away from leadership exhausted and broken by too much joyless-accounting on the members? No one wins but Satan when members fail. God is not honored. Leaders are burdened. The members who persist in sin lose their relationships with God. All of this can be avoided when members understand how to regard and work productively with the appointed leaders.

The book of Hebrews closes urging the members to salute, greet, and wish their leaders well. This simple, sincere wish caps the momentous statements of the preceding verses.

Conclusion

God has declared that the work of leaders is a “*good work*” (1 Timothy 3:1). Members make the work of the leaders a good, joyful, and continually a desirable work. Those churches which have adequate number of competent leaders who continue their fruitfulness over years of leadership understand and practice the principles reviewed in this chapter. A major key to the strength, number, and continuity in a congregational leadership is the growing maturity of the members.

Preview of the Next Chapter: Leader Strong Churches Understand There Is a Necessity for Mutually Held Beliefs

Congregational unity provides a healthy environment of leadership development and continuity. Biblical beliefs that are clearly and frequently stated and mutually subscribed to by the members provide a strong, cohesive context to grow many faithful elders and robust and fruitful members.

Leader Strong Churches Understand There Is a Necessity for Mutually Held Beliefs

Growing churches that develop strong leaders know that they must be united and focused on what they believe is right and important. They see the need for a strong teaching program that keeps the members biblically instructed. They are aware how soon a church can become vulnerable to destructive beliefs if it is not freshly and regularly reminded of fundamental truths. They understand that unity is more and better ensured by deeply shared beliefs than by exciting, ministry programs. Although, to be sure, both beliefs and ministry programs that are consistent with a church's beliefs make a formidable force for unity.

There are three considerations concerning unifying beliefs that introduce the main discussion in this chapter:

- **The Place of Beliefs:** Ideas take root in beliefs or in belief systems. Beliefs give strength to those ideas, resulting in their power in uniting a people. Beliefs give a driving force and continuity to any effort. Nothing begins or continues long without mutually held beliefs.
- **The Definition of Beliefs:** Beliefs that have the potential of beginning and continuing an effort are much more than casually held truths. Such beliefs are clearly defined propositions that its adherents are uncompromisingly convinced are fundamentally true, singularly important, absolutely relevant, and life changing. These beliefs are

especially galvanized, and therefore, unassailable when they rest on unquestionable evidence that has been confirmed by life results.

- **The Relation of Beliefs to Leadership Development:** Churches that have convicted and mutually held beliefs produce convicted leaders. They produce leaders who consistently lead out of the center of those beliefs. These churches develop leaders who know who they are, whose they are, and what they are assigned to do. These leaders will excel in leadership roles to the extent their beliefs are held to be absolutely true, unquestionably important, and urgently necessary. The greatest threat to local churches is being content with blurred beliefs. Such resulting leaders do not know what they believe or even what they ought to believe. Their leadership will lack direction and conviction. The greatest need in local churches is defining and communicating unifying beliefs.

Defining Unifying Beliefs

The definition of unifying beliefs has already been accomplished by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, when He was sent to the Apostles to teach them just as Jesus told them He would:

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26).

For Christians, the definition of unifying beliefs is assured through a careful and reasoned search of the beliefs of the apostolic-instructed churches. The New Testament Scriptures unfailingly record those beliefs. How can Christians in the 21st century more clearly define these beliefs? Is there a Spirit

confirmed method or approach to assist in the interpretation of the Word? There is much in the Bible to be gleaned about the attitude one should have in the study and interpretation of Scriptures (cf. Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes). Scholars across the centuries have shared their thoughts, methods, and tools of biblical interpretation. The hermeneutical trilogy of the 1800–1900’s of deriving a sense of biblical authority by determining what is a direct command, an apostolic example, or necessary inference has served well in part. This trilogy has often either left unanswered questions or served to disrupt unity, especially in the third element of necessary inference. In reality, there is no inspired, systematic, hermeneutical approach to the study of Scriptures that is binding or efficient in all circumstances. Notice the following suggestions that offer help in the quest of a clearly defined understanding of the beliefs that must unite the Church:

- **Truth must be placed in perspective so that there is a hierarchy of truth.** All biblical truths are important and true, but not all biblical truths are equally important. Jesus spoke of the “... *the more important matters of the law*” (Matthew 23:23) and the two greater commandments on which the whole law subsisted (cf. Matthew 22:36–40) and “*the commandments*” that lead to life (cf. Matthew 19:16–22). Paul spoke of the paramount truths of “*faith, hope and love*,” exalting “*love*” as the greatest (1 Corinthians 13:13). Understanding a graduated view of truth may be helpful in the search of the Scriptures.
- **There are some truths that are more essential than others.** These truths are stated in “life and death” settings as **transformational and essential truths** on which the salvation of one’s soul depends:
 - ▶ **God is!** He holds man accountable (cf. Hebrews 11:6).

- ▶ **Christ is** the divine Son and promised Messiah (cf. John 8:12–30).
 - ▶ Sinful man must renounce his sinful life (cf. Luke 13:3).
 - ▶ The repentant believer must be baptized and raised even as his Savior was buried and resurrected to life (cf. Mark 16:16; Romans 6:1–6).
 - ▶ The believer must live an obedient life of confessed trust (cf. Matthew 10:32–33, Romans 10:9–10).
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- **There are some truths that can be called evidential truths.** These truths authenticate the essential truths with unassailable evidence:
 - ▶ God's existence and sovereignty are confirmed by creation and the biblical history of redemption.
 - ▶ The Deity and Lordship of Christ are confirmed by fulfilled prophecy and by His life, teachings, miracles, by His death, burial, resurrection, and His coronation at God's right hand.
 - ▶ Man's need to renounce his sin is confirmed by God's holiness, man's long history of sin, with God's call to holiness, and His command to repent.
 - ▶ The fact that man must be transformed into Christ's likeness is confirmed by God's call to sanctifying conversion and man's failed efforts to save himself.
 - ▶ The fact that man must live an obedient and confessed life of trust is confirmed by the recorded lives of the faithful and the dangers of unfaithfulness.
-
- **There are some truths that can be called application truths.** The Bible instructs Christians how to bring essential truths and evidential truths into real life, translating them from theory to meaningful action:

- ▶ Belief in God flourishes in studying and understanding the essential nature of God in Scripture, which encourages all men to become more like Christ.
- ▶ Belief in Christ becomes more practical as men thrive on His teachings in the Gospels, in the apostolic presentations in the Epistles, and making Him known and loved by others.
- ▶ Belief in penitent living grows in learning the rich virtues of righteousness as seen in Scriptures such as the Love Chapter of 1 Corinthians 13, the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5, and other such Scriptures.
- ▶ Belief in a spiritual transformation is strengthened by understanding the nature and place of baptism and the indwelling of the Spirit in one's saved relationship with God.
- ▶ Belief in a believer's life of loyalty and trust is made more clear by studies in prayer, Christian worship, service, and mature virtues.
- **There are some truths that can be called circumstantial truths.** The Bible records many activities that grew out of expected, cultural responses, and personal or circumstantial choices. Such activities were not essential to obeying an apostolic command nor did they form an apostolic pattern of behavior (examples would be foot washing, wearing a veil, greeting with a kiss, wearing a "coat and cloak," circumcision among Christians, making a vow, mission methods, and other such practices). While Christians could learn from these practices and even apply some of these ideas, they would not be high priority, absolutes, and certainly not a demanded basis for unity and fellowship.

Achieving Unity in the Church

Church leaders must determine to make unity a high priority in all church efforts and guard it with conviction and urgency. How can they achieve this objective?

- **Leaders need to continually teach fundamental truths** that include the unifying beliefs taught in the 1st century by the Apostles. Without basic principles in approaching the study of the Bible a believer will always feel uncertain. Each member should be encouraged in using the following principles:
 - ▶ Draw together all the “life and death” statements made by Christ for His church to understand the essential and transformational truths.
 - ▶ Examine all the evidence or supportive truths preached by the early Church relative to the essential beliefs. One example would be knowing that the belief in the resurrection supports the essential belief in the Deity of Christ.
 - ▶ Discern the age long and apostolically established beliefs that are fundamental and necessary in bringing the essential beliefs into one’s life (baptism, the Lord’s supper, and other fundamental beliefs).
 - ▶ Enjoy the study of cultural and circumstantial choices of the early Christians. Some of the choices might be appropriate choices for today in similar circumstances.

In brief, leaders should reaffirm the biblical definition of essential truths, increase their conviction based on the beliefs in the biblical evidences, and arrive at a clear understanding of the means God wants man to use to respond in real life.

- **Leaders need to plan and implement a systematic program of study that reaches every member on an ongoing basis.** A well-informed church, a deeply believing church, a church whose beliefs and performances are consistent is a united church. The leaders such a church produces will be men of conviction, men of balanced emphasis, and men of continued faithfulness. A working knowledge of the Bible includes:
 - ▶ **Structural knowledge:** Knowing the message of each biblical book, its sections, author, readers, and its purpose is the foundation on which any believer must build his Bible study life. Any Bible Handbook facilitates such knowledge.
 - ▶ **Content knowledge:** Complete familiarity of the contents of the Bible gained through daily, systematic Bible reading, continued over a lifetime, is fundamental to the spiritual growth of a believer.
 - ▶ **Textual knowledge:** Understanding truth in the Bible's historical context, section by section, provides one of the richest soils for knowing the Scriptures.
 - ▶ **Topical knowledge:** Knowing accurately all the great Bible doctrines (God, prophecy, salvation, Christ, church, second coming) is the best defense against error.
 - ▶ **Biographical knowledge:** Knowing all the patriarchs, judges, kings, prophets, Apostles, leading characters, men, and women provides the models for powerful applications.
 - ▶ **Geographical knowledge:** A thorough knowledge of the nations, lands, seas, mountains, rivers, and cities related to the periods of biblical history helps immensely in understanding and appreciating the Bible message.
- **Leaders must teach Bible study principles to all the membership.** Every Christian would do well to learn that

gaining biblical knowledge and using it should follow basic guidelines:

- ▶ One should understand and take seriously the Bible student's obligation to understand the purpose of the author, the message to the original reader, what he was expected to do with the message in his historical context, and the application of the inspired message in one's modern setting.
- ▶ One should gain the background knowledge to better accomplish the student's obligation.
- ▶ One should acquire and use updated, research tools to be most effective. Select different Bible versions, Bible dictionaries, handbooks, an atlas, commentaries, topical Bibles, word study tools, PC study Bibles, and other resource materials.
- ▶ One should develop a system to retain the knowledge in order to keep building on past studies.
- ▶ After personal application, one should organize the material to teach others and use every opportunity to share the knowledge in classes, sermons, seminars, and other methods designed for such a purpose.
- ▶ One should broaden the search for more knowledge among proven Bible instructors, becoming a lifelong Berean or an inquiring Ethiopian Treasurer.
- ▶ If gifted in writing, one should reproduce oneself by composing articles, tracts, courses, books, video studies, and through correspondence.
- ▶ One should make Bible study a lifelong commitment, never being content with any level of knowledge.
- ▶ One should know that the best access to Scripture is through the original languages of Hebrew and Greek. Mastery of the biblical languages is strongly recommended

for all those who are serious in unlocking the full knowledge of the biblical text.

A United Church Is a Balanced Church

It is important to put all four levels of truth in perspective. Undue emphasis on one level is dangerous. The churches who focus their study and unity too much on cultural or circumstantial truths most frequently are factious and make everything a test of fellowship. Churches who focus too much on applications or supportive truths most frequently are legalistic, emptying the Gospel of its warmth and winsomeness. Churches who focus too much on evidential or confirming truths most frequently are academically cold. Churches who focus or limit their studies to essential or transformation truths most frequently take on the arrogant spirit of the agnostics. A balanced church brings all four levels of truths under careful study. The results are predictable: unity, not division; freedom, not legalism; conviction, not theory; humility, not pride.

If one wants to pursue a study concerning unifying beliefs, a study of the absolute minimums cited by Paul in Ephesians 4:4–6 will help set the perimeters of unity. He lists seven essential beliefs:

There is one body and one Spirit . . . one hope . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

A deviation from these basic truths leads people astray and fractures the unity of the church. From an overall study of the Bible there emerges a central body of beliefs that bind people together and form the thrust of its preaching and communication with the world:

- There is one God.
- He communicates in inerrant scripture.
- Man is lost.
- God has a plan to save man.
- Jesus Christ is God's Son.
- Jesus Christ became man's Savior and Lord.
- Man has hope.
- Man enters God's family through Christ.
- Man has eternal life.
- The world is not man's home.

One must study each of the truths and, from the whole of Scriptures, buttress each one with the evidential truths that confirm these essential truths. Then one needs to add the application or supportive truths to bring these essential truths into daily life. Finally, it is important to compare the cultural truths that flavored the circumstantial choices of early Christians to the modern scene.

Conclusion

Such productive Bible study will promote the growth of deeply and mutually held beliefs in a congregation. Such a church will have a firm grip on what they believe through the essential truths and why they believe through evidential truths. They will also know how to make those truths be life changing through the applicational truths and how to enhance their unity with rich choices through the circumstantial or culture choices. Such a church, united in biblical beliefs, will soon be increasingly mature to produce the number and quality of leaders it will need on a continuing basis.

**Preview of the Next Chapter:
Leader Strong Churches Must Understand
There Is Value in a United Purpose**

Leader strong churches under the Lordship of Christ have a unifying purpose. They know why they exist, what results they must achieve and what resources they have to reach their objectives. Purpose-oriented churches produce strong leaders. Less committed and less decisive churches produce less fruitful leaders. This should be a chapter that will lift some fresh, ministry horizons and give rise to a renewed hope for growth in every church.

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God had a far-reaching purpose in creation and redemption. Noah had an urgent purpose in building the ark. Moses had a challenging purpose in leading Israel out of Egypt. Christ had a saving purpose in coming among men. Paul stated his purpose in working among brethren: “*We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ*” (Colossians 1:28). The early Christians had a commissioned purpose in penetrating the Roman Empire. Churches in the 21st century must have stated purposes to maximize their potential. Leader strong churches have a well-defined, well communicated, and mutually shared purpose. After building a worthy purpose into the fabric of the church, they will likely renew or choose a new, challenging purpose every three-to-five years.

Purpose Driven Churches Are Well Managed

The Church in the 21st century is confronted with some of the greatest challenges of any century. Her resources and faith waver before the enormity of the challenges. Yet, the marching orders are still as clearly stated as in the first century. The modern version of “. . . when the time had fully come . . .” (Galatians 4:4; cf. Ephesians 1:10) requires rethinking every known resource and raising the levels of ministry competency.

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The practice of efficiency, a discipline of taking care of business and a commitment to stewardship, forms the context for a purpose-driven church. There are four areas where good planning and management can be seen. A leader strong church must be a good steward in all of these areas:

- **Policies:** Every church should write their policy decisions in the form of statements and review them periodically. Reasons for the policy decisions need to be stated and re-evaluated. Policy decisions often become outdated and some are no longer necessary.
- **Programs:** Every program of a church should be reviewed occasionally to determine if it is efficient, still relative to changing needs, and a justifiable priority.
- **Personnel:** Every church must have willing and efficient people in its many ministry roles, whether employed or volunteer. Key people as elders, deacons, evangelists, teachers, and other leadership personnel need to be kept productive. A review may indicate a better ministry role, a need for further training, or simply encouragement.
- **Place:** If a church invests a significant amount of its resources in a building, it must be used much and maintained well for the best and longest use. Responsible leaders, placing a high priority on being good stewards, avoid spending large percentages of the congregational budget on a building that leaves no funds to conduct fruitful ministries.

Taking care of business is important. However, even if a congregation does well in each of these above areas, it will still

lose much of its possible impact for good if it does not have a well considered and challenging purpose.

Purpose Driven Churches Are Visionary

The purposes and goals of a church may change periodically to confront the changing times in society. A church which intends to be constantly moving forward must have an overall, compelling vision of her place in the Kingdom Enterprise. A vision is her “northern star” by which she never loses her direction or way in a stormy and often dark world. A congregational vision declares the ultimate concern of the congregation. It is the core of the particular family of faith. Some churches, whether stated or evidenced by their preaching, center their ultimate concern (or vision) on particular issues, choice outcomes, or specific persons. Jesus stated His ultimate concern was “. . . to do the will of him who sent me [the Father]” (John 4:34, 6:38). Stripping everything aside from the incidental to the staggering, important things, the abiding vision of the church must have something to do with glorifying and honoring a Holy God and bringing many souls into His presence. From those considerations must flow the purposes, goals, and ministry plans of a growing church.

Purpose Driven Churches Are Well Informed

If a church is to mutually accept and develop a guiding purpose its members need to be well informed from the very beginning of the definition of a congregational purpose:

- **Members must know the function of a purpose.** A statement of purpose is a statement of self-identity. It informs others and reminds the church of its reason for

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being. A stated purpose boldly says if we don't do anything else, we must . . . ? It commits a church's major resources to a predetermined end. It announces that there is no other priority as worthy as the church's stated purpose. It promises God to offer up a specific offering that is believed to be pleasing to Him. A stated purpose affirms that the world would be poorer if the purpose remained unaccomplished. It speaks convincingly that the church is serious about her intent to glorify God. It guides to a desired outcome as a star guides a sailor at sea.

- **Members must know how a purpose relates to the growth cycle of a healthy church.** A healthy, growing church has a history of renewing herself every three-to-five years. Consistent to her unity beliefs she has a clearly stated group purpose. After a general limit of five years, if a church does not renew herself with a new or reaffirmed purpose she will begin to decline. The first indicators are nostalgic statements of members recalling better times of the past, comparing them favorably with the present. If the purpose is not restated and re-enforced, then questions, laced with doubt, will be asked and varied complaints concerning the church will be increasingly expressed. If leaders ignore the warning signs, blocks of discontented members will draw themselves together in a common cause of complaints. This polarization, at last, will result in disruption in varied forms of individual or group slowdowns such as withholding in giving of resources, withdrawal from some activities, or in some cases, in hurtful division. However, if the leaders call the church to accept a valid purpose, momentum will again characterize the church. People must have a purpose they can believe in and in which they feel a part. Wise leaders never let the growth cycle turn downward. As a purpose runs its cycle of three-to-five years they will lead the church, again and again, through a congregational, purpose selection.

- **Members must know the procedures for selecting a purpose.** While circumstances vary there are some general guidelines that need to be considered in any purpose setting process:
 - ▶ **Communicate the value, nature, and necessity of a congregational purpose.** Classes and sermons on biblical examples of purpose statements and results, stewardship, fruitfulness, and excellence could be planned.
 - ▶ **Prepare the members for the selection of a purpose.** Give them instructions on choosing purposes that are biblical, purposes that are consistent to the unifying beliefs of the congregation, and purposes that are stated in short, crisp language.
 - ▶ **Set aside a specific service when the members can submit a church purpose statement.** A general request in the bulletin or an assembly announcement usually will not bring useful results.
 - ▶ **Plan a congregational seminar** to work on the submitted purpose statements and others that will come out of the seminar groups.
 - ▶ **Compose a short list of purposes** submitted by the members and refined in the seminar. From all the purposes suggested by the members it should not be difficult to select three-to-four that would meet any standard.
 - ▶ **Present the select purposes in a convincing way.** Plan a banquet or special service. A memorable event underlines the importance of the request. Choose good speakers, each to present one of the purposes.
 - ▶ **Let the congregation make a choice.** Any purpose selected from the short list would be one that the leaders will have already evaluated. They would have

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already agreed to lead toward the fulfillment of any one of the proposed purposes.

- ▶ **Announce the resultant congregational purpose to the church.** This will become the call to action enlisting every member.
- ▶ **Communicate the purpose often, clearly, and creatively.** Good communication ensures the belief and investment by the members. The church without a worthy, well understood purpose or with a forgotten purpose experiences the same result, it loses its momentum toward growth.
- **Members must know some examples of a congregational purpose.** Even though each church must choose a purpose that best expresses the make-up and resources of the church, it would be helpful for a congregation choosing a purpose to know what other churches have chosen. Consider the following examples:
 - ▶ **Be a Church Committed to the New Testament Agenda.** The purpose statement of being committed to the New Testament Agenda would be a commitment to evangelism in all directions, apostolic instruction of new converts, ministry gift discovery and development, ministry involvement of every member according to one's giftedness, selection of deacons in ministry leadership, and selection of shepherds in the care of the flock. After several years pursuing such a purpose it would become a permanent part of the fabric of the church. The congregation could be ready in three-to-five years to renew herself with another purpose.

- ▶ **Be a Whole Church Communicating a Whole Gospel to a Whole World to Glorify a Holy God.** The purpose emphasizing “**Whole Church, Whole Gospel, Whole World**” would become a compelling commitment for the following three years or more.
 - ▶ **Dare to Be Christ’s Church.** The purpose of this church was to commit itself to courageously let Christ lead her to be the kind of church He would want.
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- **Members must know what follows the selection of a purpose.** A written purpose is vital to a good beginning. However, it must be followed by the practical aspects of church growth. The church must set goals and sub-goals, plan some action steps for achieving the desired outcomes, and devote determined, single-minded efforts to fulfill the purpose. Church leaders will need to inform the members and lead them in goal setting and planning. Consider the following **goal setting guidelines** so that members will know the best approaches to accomplishing these goals:
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- ▶ Make a creative inventory of desired outcomes that are consistent to the stated purpose and the congregational vision or ultimate concern.
 - ▶ Prioritize the most desirable outcomes.
 - ▶ Frame the goals in positive outcome statements.
 - ▶ Make **S.M.A.R.T.** goals by being — Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Tangible.
 - ▶ Define perimeters of control, describing the verifiable limits and obstacles.
 - ▶ Preview the outcome, picture what will be accomplished when the goal is reached.
 - ▶ Develop strategies for each goal considering the available resources, deterrents, the progression, guiding models, and environment.

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- ▶ Initiate action according to the plan.
- ▶ Review and evaluate the unfolding outcome, celebrating the harvest at important stages and at the end.

The following are some examples of choosing goals that are consistent with the selected purpose:

- The church which chose the purpose of “Being a **Whole Church**” chose the following goals to carry out the purpose:
 - ▶ Becoming a whole church in identifying and promoting personal growth areas as a whole person.
 - ▶ Becoming a whole church with every member having discovered, developed, and employed his or her ministry potential.
 - ▶ Communicating the whole Gospel, beginning with the membership having studied and understood the message of salvation.
 - ▶ Looking to the whole world and requiring the members to understand the lostness of sinners and how to reach them. It would be further enhanced by learning the mission geography of the world and choosing and getting involved in mission opportunities, near and far.
 - ▶ Glorifying a Holy God becomes the ultimate concern of the church.

Being a “Whole Church” could introduce a healthy growth cycle of three-to-five years, making it a permanent feature of the church before going on to another compelling purpose.

- The church who chose the purpose of “**DARING** to Be Christ’s Church” set up six goals they would work on

achieving. This purpose statement presented itself acrostically and biblically in six parts based on:

- **D** — Developing Leaders
- **A** — Acknowledging Life's Needs
- **R** — Reaching the Unchurched
- **I** — Involving People and their Gifts
- **N** — Nurturing New Members
- **G** — Giving the Best (financially, time, and life style)

Done well, each aspect has the potential for much growth in daring to be Christ's church. The six parts of the purpose statement are vital activities of a faithful, fruitful church.

- Determine the necessary action steps. Each congregational purpose would likely have five-to-six goals to fulfill the purpose. The examples just cited included both the selected purpose and the needed goals to fulfill the purpose. Then the church will need to plan how she will reach her goals. Setting action steps may include assembling the budget resources, organizing ministry initiatives, training gifted workers, and keeping the membership informed and motivated. The action steps should be developed for each of the several goal areas to contribute to fulfilling the overall purpose.

Conclusion

Churches who are growing see the value of being inspired and guided by a God-glorifying purpose. Such churches guard against valleys of decline and loss of their momentum by a commitment to a worthy purpose. A growing church, challenged by purposeful leaders, is a great environment for producing new and visionary leaders.

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Preview of the Next Chapter: Leader Strong Churches Understand There Is a Central Importance of Exalting God in Worship

There are no more important periods in the history of a congregation than her weekly worship assemblies. The major experiences crucial for developing leaders happen in the temple presence of God. Churches who develop strong leaders have worship assemblies that are as life changing as Isaiah's visit to the temple in Isaiah 6.

Leader Strong Churches Understand There Is a Central Importance in Exalting God in Worship

Men and women were made to worship God, both for His longing and joy for relationship with His creation and for man's created need to worship and to express his deepest feelings and needs. Filling the vacuum within mankind with any other object of worship would be to their own detriment, even eternal loss. Man needs to look outside himself for ultimate security and order. His definition of purpose and his motivation to excel can be no higher than the object of his trust, worship, and service. Worship is singularly important for Christians. Therefore, leader strong churches give quality attention to the LORD's Day assemblies. The specific reasons for such priority attention are obvious:

- There is no other occasion on the church calendar to touch the lives of more members at one time during a week.
- A vibrant assembly creates a growth context for most of the congregational activities and gives a sense of stability and direction.
- An assembly that is scripturally designed to please God results in all the spiritual blessings of obedience.

However, in regard to leadership development there is much more that happens in the assembly. In fact, the most

important, the most basic, and the most dynamic changes required to develop leaders can occur in the assembly. If it can be shown that leadership development can be greatly impacted by worship assemblies, then those assemblies demand priority attention of the church. At least, leader strong churches should be encouraged to examine the dynamics of worship to see how much an assembly can impact the training of leaders in the following ways:

- Worship assemblies place the major focus on the majesty, holiness, and authority of God.
- A worship assembly is the major place for one being instructed in the biblical truths that lift horizons of life and service.
- Worship assemblies open the door to the Spirit of God to impact a worshiper in the formation of character, resulting in a harvest of fruit.
- Worship assemblies provide the opportunity to a family of believers to mutually throw themselves on the mercy and grace of God, committing themselves to honor His Holy Name.
- Worship assemblies draw people of like mind and motive to bind themselves in mutual regard and fraternal love.
- Worship assemblies anchor a week to inspire convicted people to reach out to help the needy and entreat the lost.
- Worship assemblies pour over into small devotional groups, families, and individual lives in bringing people into the continuing presence of God.

The Bible is rich with instruction in developing a worshiping church. Most people concur that the place to begin to understand God, the Object of worship, and the attitude of the worshipers is in the Psalms and on some of the mountain peaks in the Prophets like Isaiah 6. Perhaps the most basic and

inspirational studies in the Bible to understand God in His divine majesty can be found in the study of the meanings of the names of God: Elohim, Jehovah (Yahweh), Adonai, El Shaddai, and numerous derivatives (cf. Herbert Lockyer, All of the Divine Names and Titles in the Bible, Zondervan). The simple fact is that the fullness of worship grows in direct relationship to one's growing sense of awe in the August presence of God.

Knowing the Object of Worship from Psalms

For three thousand years worshipers have gone to the Psalms of David to find understanding of the majesty and holiness of God, seen as the ***Omni-God*** in power, knowledge, presence, and competency. Before worship can even begin to be pleasing to God and beneficial to worshipers, they must begin to know Him in the multifaceted way in which David presented Him in the Psalms. He is presented in the temple, in storms, in tragedies, in darkness or quietness of nights, in depths of the seas, in times of harvest, in seasons of drought, and in the clamor and bloodshed of war. He is called the Rock, Shield, Sword, Fortress, Refuge, Shepherd, Most High, Habitation, High Tower, Savior, Creator, Law Giver, Redeemer, Deliverer, Father, King, Lord of lords, Lord of Hosts, Judge, Hope of Israel, the Almighty One, the One God, the Great God, the Eternal One, from Everlasting to Everlasting, Ancient of Days, to name a few.

Knowing the Attitude of Worship from Isaiah

From the two worship experiences recorded by Isaiah, men learn much about the proper attitude of worship. **Uzziah**, the

king of Judah, unlawfully entered the temple to offer incense. He was swiftly struck with leprosy, becoming “unclean” to his nation and family, being separated from society, and dying as a leprous outcast (cf. 2 Chronicles 26:16–23). He showed all the worship attitudes that displease Jehovah:

- He entered the presence of God without reverence.
- He offered an act of worship to enhance his own honor.
- He offered a self-designed act of worship, ignoring God’s appointed way.
- He entered the presence of God impenitent for his sins and careless concerning the predictable judgment of God.

In reading about the times of Uzziah, one clearly sees how his sinful actions of irreverence, self-righteous pride, presumption, and insensitivity mirrored the national sins of the people.

Isaiah, a member of the royal family who was to become the prince among God’s prophets, either had a vision of God in His temple or was standing at the threshold of the great doors of the temple. Being of the kingly tribe, Isaiah had no more right than Uzziah to enter the temple. He saw Jehovah, the righteous King, “. . . seated on a throne, high and exalted . . .” (Isaiah 6:1). Isaiah saw the royal robes flowing down from the throne and carpeting the temple floor. He saw celestial beings surrounding the throne in readiness to serve the enthroned King. He heard them in a responsive, resounding chorus exalting their King as incomparable, superlatively above, distantly separated from all others, and unapproachably superior. Divine holiness was the choral theme as they proclaimed the fullness of their King’s glory in all the earth. The foundations of the threshold (that is literally, “*door sockets*”) shook at the sound of the voice and the temple was filled with smoke. Notice the attitudes expressed by Isaiah that

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A Central Importance in Exalting God in Worship

have stood the test of the centuries as those that inspire worshipers to rise to the heights of worship:

- Isaiah was **compelled**, deeply moved, and enamored by the display of divine grandeur, majesty, and holiness.
- Isaiah was **convicted** of his sinfulness. He could relate to his king, the sinful Uzziah, who by law had to cover his diseased mouth and cry out, “Unclean, unclean!” The incredible distance between Isaiah and the incomparable nature of God demanded his candid and humble recognition of sin.
- Isaiah was **conscience stricken**, grieved, and shaken by the recognition of the rampant, widespread sinfulness of all those around him. All were guilty of the same sins that brought swift judgment on Uzziah. He and the nation stood precariously in danger of justified judgment.
- Isaiah **confessed**, agreed with God, that he was unfit to be in the incomparable presence of God. By this confession Isaiah acknowledged that in his unclean state he was lost, without recourse, and had only the judgment of God in prospect.
- Isaiah was **cleansed!** On cue, it seems, one of the choral members ran to the sacrificial altar, took a burning stone, and cleansed, cauterized, the sinful mouth of Isaiah.
- Isaiah heard a **call** from God to go on His behalf (presumably to preach to sinful Judah). His experiences had made him alert to the presence and purposes of God.
- Isaiah **committed** himself. Now he saw a life-changing purpose. Because of what had happened to him, he felt compelled to share the life-changing experiences with others. He knew the hopeless feeling of lostness and the incredible joy of salvation. He could find no rest knowing that all those around him faced certain judgment unless they, too, were cleansed. So he responded to the divine question of who would go to the lost people. He unhesitatingly

committed himself and imploringly begged, “*Here am I. Send me!*”

- Isaiah was **commissioned**. The stark outlines of the commission were clearly drawn. God had laid bare the threats to success, the certain frustration of hope, and the insurmountable difficulties inherent in the commission.
- Isaiah **sought direction**. He was faced with reality and felt compelled to know the cost of his faithfulness. He was not expressing doubt or an inclination to turn away from the threats of the commission. He wanted to know the will of the LORD. In the reflection on the impossible commission, he asked for direction, “How long must I preach to these people?”
- Isaiah was **confirmed**. The divine response was clear and direct, “Preach until I tell you to stop.” God’s answer illustrates how Isaiah’s obligation was simple and singular, “Be faithful.” Isaiah was to be faithful to the commission even if the people resisted and deserted him, even when there seemed to be no hope.

The attitudes of Uzziah in worship are to be rejected. The attitudes of Isaiah in worship are to be developed by every developing leader. These attitudes are basic, even absolute minimums, to prepare for leadership. A man with all the skills, well-schooled in leadership principles, even exemplary in morals and family life who has not been to the temple is still unfit for leadership. He cannot lead well. He lacks the primary qualities of a good leader. The poverty of leadership qualities will too soon show in his regard for God and His will. It will too soon be glaringly evident that there is little urgency in dealing with the lostness of the sinner or in keeping himself right before God. Wherever else the life-changing experiences

of Isaiah might take place, they best take place in the temple presence of God in the assembly of worshipers.

The Worship Assembly and a Leader Strong Church

The local church, intent on developing leaders and seeing the church grow, knows how singularly important it is that the assembly be a place where the worshiper regularly experiences the following:

- “*...the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up . . .*” (Isaiah 6:1, KJV).
- . . . being compelled by the unique, unapproachable holiness of God.
- . . . the weight of the single obstacle of unresolved sin to a right relationship with God and opens the heart in confession.
- . . . the recurrence and joy of divine healing from disobedient sin.

These experiences must form a set of attitudes as the worshiper views the exalted LORD. He must be impacted with the hopeless sense of personal lostness and the exhilarating joy of salvation. These attitudes must compel the faithful worshiper to commit to soul winning and a long life of faithfulness. Without these attitudes deeply burning in the hearts of leaders, leadership has little purpose, urgency, or fruitful results. The driving truth is that God must be exalted in every worship assembly.

Knowing the Contents of Worship from the Testimony of Scriptures

Champions in worship across the centuries have followed the same pathways. The contents of their times of worship are similar. They have consistently included eight elements in lifting up their worship to God. The contents of prayer can also be applied to the contents of worship, private or public.

A leader strong church will be dedicated to emphasizing the following elements in her worship services:

- **Adoration** — standing in awe of Jehovah's essential qualities and Divine Person. Genuine adoration is the most uplifting aspect of mature worship. Adoration is to joyously acknowledge the Person of God, being overwhelmed by and rejoicing over who He is in His very nature. To adore God in worship requires a study of all the essential qualities revealed in Scripture and falling in love with the Person of God. He is Holy, meaning that He is superlatively above, incomparable to, and fully distinguished from all proclaimed deities. There is none like Him. He is *omni* in all His traits: omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnicompetent.

Scripture References: 2 Samuel 22:2–3; 1 Chronicles 29:11–13; Psalms 8:1, 36:5–9, 57:5; Jeremiah 10:6–7; Revelation 15:3–4.

- **Praise** — marveling at God's works that tower over man. One of the aspects of worship at its fullest is praising God in the exercise of His essential qualities. In reading the accounts of creation and of divine revelation and seeing God at work in the lives of people and in the affairs of nations, the human response should be one of awe,

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erupting in praise. God is to be praised in His redemption of man and in His preparation for an eternal destiny for the redeemed. Praise is man's way of applauding God for jobs well done!

Scripture References: Psalms 71:19, 103:1–5, 104:1–32, 145:10–20; Isaiah 24:1–5; Revelation 15:3–4.

- **Thanksgiving** — gratefulness for what God has done on man's behalf. Every minute of a believer's day, every turn of the road, and every rising and setting of the sun is an occasion for expressing gratitude to an ever-giving God. The gifts of God are copious and fit for man's every need. “Thank you God . . .” should be the constant, repeating refrain of the worshiper's life.

Scripture References: 1 Chronicles 29:13; Jonah 2:2–9; Matthew 26:26; Luke 24:30; Acts 27:35.

- **Confession** — acknowledging man's need for God. Confession means “to agree with.” One who worships fully must be in constant and contrite agreement with God concerning personal failures and needs. Such worship recognizes that God is always right, is always able, and is always ready to intervene according to His will. A trusting, dependent spirit finds comfort and strength in full supply at the throne of grace. A worshiper who rejoices in his confessor relationship with the Most High finds it easier and more rewarding to “. . . confess your sins to each other and pray for each other . . .” (James 5:16).

Scripture References: Genesis 32:11; 2 Chronicles 20:12; 2 Samuel 24:10; Ezra 9:6; Psalms 40:17, 54:1–4.

- **Petition** — a call for God to overrule in the affairs of men. Most often a petition is a statement of a need or a cause bigger than the petitioner and an urgent request for a specific outcome. A petition is not a demand of the strong but an appeal from the lesser to the greater. A worshiper addresses what God can do over and above anything the petitioner might do. A worshiper's petition is his call for God to overrule in the affairs of men to achieve a specific and deeply desired outcome.

Scripture References: Genesis 15:2; 1 Kings 3:9; 1 Chronicles 4:10; Nehemiah 1:11; Psalms 31:1–4; Lamentations 5:21–22; Jeremiah 64: 1–2, 9; Daniel 9:15–19.

- **Intercession** — a plea on behalf of another. Concern for others and wanting the best for others usually takes the form of an intervention on a person's behalf. Calling on God is a worshiper's best and quickest way to get something moving that is beneficial to those in need:
 - ▶ Jesus interceded for Peter (cf. Luke 22:31).
 - ▶ Paul interceded for brethren in Ephesus (cf. Ephesians 1:15–16).
 - ▶ Paul interceded for brethren in Philippi (cf. Philippians 1:3–4) and in Colosse (cf. Colossians 1:3).
 - ▶ Paul urged brethren to pray for him (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1).
 - ▶ Fraternal relationships are built when brethren know that other brethren regularly talk with God about them.
 - ▶ Intercessory prayer in worship is a vital part of a brother-to-brother covenant.

Scripture References: Genesis 18:23–32, 25:21; Deuteronomy 26:27; 1 Kings 13:6; 2 Kings 6:17–20; 1 Chronicles 29:18–19; John 17:1–26; Acts 7:60, Ephesians 1:15–23.

- **Commitment** — a promise of our responsible participation. There can be no relationship with a promise making and a promise keeping God if men are not ready to make promises and exhaust all opportunities to keep them. Salvation thrives on an appropriate human response to divine initiatives. Seeking divine favor is completed by gratefulness and responsible commitment on the part of the human recipient. The more that is given, then more will be required (cf. Luke 12:48). Commitment in worship should burst with promises of responsible participation. Note how commitment is an expressed or clear part of the model prayer of Jesus:

“Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen]” (Matthew 6:9–13, NAS).

- ▶ V. 9: “*Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name*”— a commitment to honor and exalt God the Father.
- ▶ V. 10: “*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*”— a promise to work to make the Lordship of Heaven more real to others.
- ▶ V. 11: “*Give us this day our daily bread.*”— a promise to be both an industrious worker and a frugal, grateful steward.

- ▶ V. 12: “*And forgive our debts as we have forgiven our debtors.*” — a promise to forgive all others for offenses.
- ▶ V. 13: “*And do not lead us into temptations, but deliver us from evil.*”— a promise to rebuff all temptations and fight against the most cherished personal sins.
- ▶ V. 13: “*For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*” — a promise to recognize, extol, and honor the exalted position of the Father.

Commitment in worship is a partnership with God. Thus, the worshiper prays fervently and promises faithfully like everything depended solely on God, but then gets up and works diligently like everything depended on him.

Scripture References: 1 Samuel 1:11; Psalms 39:1, 51:13, 104:33, 145:1–2; Jeremiah 20:12.

- **Communion** — a pouring out of hearts, a sharing of the Spirit. Prayer in worship is not just bowing one’s head, closing one’s eyes, raising one’s hands, and speaking out to God. Prayer in worship also includes quiet reflection, earnest meditation, humble listening, and waiting on the LORD. Prayer in worship is waiting on the Spirit of God to translate into heavenly terms what man feels deeply but cannot express appropriately to the Father (cf. Romans 8:26–27). As often occurs between husband and wife, so there is with God a communion of the Spirit in deeply felt devotion, affection, trust, and longing.

Scripture References: Psalms 42:1–11, 55:1–8, 57:1–2, 102:1–11, 139:23–24; Isaiah 26:9; Lamentations 3:48–55.

Leaders would do well in designing worship services as saints have modeled across the centuries: adoration, praise, thanksgiving, confession, petition, intercession, commitment, and communion.

Knowing the Purpose of Worship from the Saints of Old

The purposes of worship are illustrated well in the section above on the contents of worship. A few more references add further purposes:

- To answer perplexing questions — David had painful, confusing questions as to why the wicked prospered and the righteous suffered: “*till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny*” (Psalm 73:17).
- “. . . let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24–25).
- The worship assembly provides the opportunity for Christians to — “. . . confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:16).
- Assemblies described in 1 Corinthians 14, 1 Corinthians 16, Acts 20, and other such scriptures provide insights into the purposes of saints coming together: worship in exalting God, edifying one another, remembering the needy, and other activities.

Knowing the Order of Worship

Somewhere, over several centuries ago, an order of worship began taking form and, along the way, gained such a standing as to be almost universally practiced and regarded as all but law. Only slight variations could be noted from one end of the earth to the other. There were three songs (most often from a small collection of songs), a prayer, maybe a Scripture reading, a sermon of good length, communion, collection, announcements, and closing prayer. They were called the five acts of Scriptural worship. While there is no doubt that all five experiences in worship (singing, praying, preaching, Lord's Supper, and giving) were practiced variously wherever saints worshiped together, there is no one place where such a full and precise agenda of worship is described in the New Testament to authorize a "Scriptural order of worship." Each item is commonly found in various worship settings but never all together as an agenda of worship. It is commonly concluded that the early saints met regularly on the first day of the week, as suggested in Troas and Corinth (cf. Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:1–2). The reasoning is, as evidenced in one case at Troas (cf. Acts 20:7), that meeting every week to partake of the Lord's Supper and to have preaching was the norm for all the churches. The above comments are not said to denigrate or lessen the powerful avenues of worship practiced over the last two millenniums among Christians. Conclusions may be sound but the rather contrived way Christians often have reached some of their conclusions might profit from better examination.

All five experiences of worship have long blessed those who seek the presence of God. All five worship experiences can be profitably and increasingly enjoyed to the glory of God in lifting each up to God with freshness and variety:

- The act of **preaching** may take many forms.

- **Singing** can be arranged in various ways.
- The **communion** can be made ever the more rich with careful thought.
- **Giving** can be more than a dutiful act when it is enhanced with teaching, meditation, and active participation.
- **Prayer** can be fuller in walking all of the eight pathways of prayer already studied.
- While holding on to the high priority of unity in the body and guarding against restless and empty changes in worship forms, Christians need to be ever vigilant to search for more effective forms of glorifying God in worship at every level that are consistent with the **purposes** of worship.

How Does Instrumental Music Relate to Christian Worship?

The question of an instrumental accompaniment in Christian worship is a troublesome issue. It has been across the course of the Christian era. In the period of the Church Fathers (200 A.D. – 400 A.D.) there were adverse things written about suggestions of its use in worship (for example comments by Ambrose, Basil, Chrysostom). By 800 A.D. churches in the Western World began using instruments of music against the objections of other churches. By 1000 A.D. its full-blown use in the West became one of the three issues that eventually led to the division of churches in the West and churches in the East — resulting in the Roman Catholic church and the Orthodox churches (that is Authority of the Bishops, Procession of the Holy Spirit, and Mechanical Music in Worship). In the efforts of the Reformation Period of 1400–1600 A.D. the principal reformers were opposed to the usage of instruments of music (especially men like Luther of the Lutheran movement, Calvin of the Presbyterian movement, John Wesley of the Methodist movement).

The usual beginning point of the discussion is the many references in the Old Testament to the use of instrumental music in relationship to worship. Music was woven into the social order of Israel. Historians have well documented that the people of Israel were a singing people, using multiple instruments (cf. 1 Samuel 10:5). By Moses' direction, trumpets were used to summon the people to a convocation (cf. Leviticus 23:24; Numbers 29:1). The feasts on a full, new moon were to be announced by the sounding of trumpets (cf. Psalms 81:5), along with songs, shouts, lyres, harps, and timbrels (tambourines). In the public processions of the nation to celebrate national and religious events there was the use of the lyre, harp, timbrel, trumpet, cymbals, stringed instruments, and pipe. The bringing of the "*ark of the covenant*" to the temple was accompanied with the playing of all kinds of instruments and choral singing (cf. 1 Chronicles 15:19, 28; 2 Samuel 6:5). The dedication of the temple of Solomon was celebrated in song and music on the instruments (cf. 2 Chronicles 5:11–14, 7:6, Psalms 68:24–26). In addition to cymbals, harps and lyres, there were 120 priests blowing trumpets. These events were huge, national events that focused on the core events of the Jewish religion.

Singing, as worship, was dominant throughout the Old Testament. Especially in the Psalms, David often spoke of praising God in song (for example: "*I will sing to the LORD as long as I live. I will sing praise to my God while I have my being*"— Psalms 104:33). Yet, it is clear that singing was accompanied by instruments in many situations in the Old Testament, including, at times, in worship settings.

During the times of David there seems to have been a surge of instruments of music associated with worship. It would seem natural that David, being an accomplished harpist and poet, would, if not prohibited by God, feel compelled to worship God with instruments of music (cf. Psalms 98:4–6). David made instruments specifically for praising God and they

gave “*praise by their means*” (2 Chronicles 7:6, NAS). Whereas many kinds of instruments were commonly enjoyed in Israel, David invented some whose tones were expressive of the worshipful moods of joy, thanksgiving, and praise. At times David referred to using instruments to accompany his praise in song:

- Praise was to be offered in the sanctuary with instruments of music at specific times during the service (cf. Psalm 150:1–5).
- Praise was to be sung to the LORD in the congregation with instruments of music (cf. Psalm 149:3).
- The praise of David in a new song was offered to God on a harp of ten strings (cf. Psalm 144:9, 133:2–3).
- The thanksgivings of David from his soul were accompanied by harp and lyre (cf. Psalm 108:1–4).

Because of the broad, referenced use of instruments in worship, especially from David onward, some would have been more comfortable if there had been greater clarity of God having sanctioned the use as He did in setting up the tabernacle ordinances in Exodus. Some are cautious because we find no clear, condemnation or prohibition (Note: Amos 5:21–24, 6:5; the condemnation of instruments of music like those of David was because of their injustice and debouched life style. For the same reasons he condemned their feast days and offerings). God did not send the prophet Nathan to condemn David in the use of instruments of music as He had done in the case of Bathsheba or sternly reprimand him as when he took the prohibited census. Some suggest that God was indifferent to instrumental music and tolerated its use in David’s time as Jesus said He tolerated their historic abuse of marriage (cf. Matthew 19:8). Some suggest that instrumental music was not in the original plan of God and that He “winked” at its use as

expressed by Paul concerning the ignorance of the Athenians (cf. Acts 17:30). However, it seems there is a tacit confirmation of God's approval in the filling of the new temple with a cloud and "*the glory of the LORD filled the temple*" (2 Chronicles 7:1–6, compare Isaiah 6:1–6). More emphatic are the following considerations:

- A divine pattern for worship that included instruments and priestly musicians was given ". . . in the way prescribed by David and Gad the King's seer and Nathan the prophet; this was commanded by the LORD through his prophets" (2 Chronicles 29:25). At one point there were 4,000 Levites praising God with instruments (cf. 1 Chronicles 23:5). Prophets played the lyres, harps, and cymbals ". . . for the music of the temple of the LORD . . . for the ministry at the house of God" (cf. 1 Chronicles 25:1, 6). A full picture is given of the priests and Levites praising God with instruments in the new temple of Solomon (cf. 2 Chronicles 5:11–14).
- When Hezekiah launched a reform to cleanse the neglected temple and resume the offerings and sacrifices, he also set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David and of the king's seer and Nathan the prophet according to the commandment of the LORD by his prophets. The Levites stood with the instruments of David: lyre, harps, and cymbal (cf. 1 Chronicles 15:16) and the priests with the trumpets. When Josiah restored temple worship and when Nehemiah dedicated the new temple, they both went to David for their use of instruments of music (cf. 2 Chronicles 29:26, 34:12; Nehemiah 12:27, 35–36; Ezra 3:10).

Some historians have concluded that the use of instruments of music in public worship was limited to the temple services to the period of offering and to three instruments (lyre, cymbal, and harp (cf. 1 Chronicles 29–30), along with trumpets. The

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instruments were played only during the time of burnt offerings. When the offerings were completed, the people worshiped with the singing of the priests. Also, historians have concluded that mechanical music was not used religiously in the synagogues or in the villages.

Against the background of the lavish use of instruments during the temple services, the absence of the use of instruments in praise in the New Testament documents is puzzling. This absence includes any use among early Christians, any specific, apostolic command to use instrumental music or any prohibition. Except for two passages describing congregational worship in the New Testament there is silence as if something had already been settled or that its use or non use was not an issue. Likewise, as stated before, if there was a use of instruments, it remained shrouded in silence in early Christian history until scant mention began to be made in the sixth century. Its use became a dividing issue in the 1000 A.D. and afterwards in the great schism resulting in the Roman Catholic church and the Eastern Orthodox churches. The Western church began the use of instruments in worship in the sixth century A.D. over the objections of the Eastern churches. It became one of three dividing issues in 1000 A.D.

Singing among believers is mentioned often in the New Testament (cf. Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13). All of these passages, except two, are general in nature, proving mostly that New Testament saints sang in all kinds of occasions: Jesus among His Apostles, in prison, in assemblies, as a messianic fulfillment, in visiting with the sick. None has the force or function of the Ephesians and Colossians passages. Each could be supplementary but not crucial to the discussion of music in the Christian worship.

Note the two New Testament passages that best address the question of music in corporate, Christian worship:

• **Ephesians 5:18–19:**

. . . be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.

The issue focuses on the word translated “*make music*” which is ***psallo***. It presents some problems to the translators and interpreters in as much as the word can be correctly understood differently. It was used differently throughout the centuries. The context has to determine the definition of its meaning.

- Some, clearly the majority of churches in the West, see the Greek word ***psallo*** as meaning “*to pluck*” as on the strings of a harp, thus playing on an instrument in worship. The word was used in such a way in many biblical verses when an instrument was clearly the context. Buttressing this understanding is the use of instrumental music in the Old Testament, temple worship. Thus, the passage would teach that both “*singing*” and “*playing*” were motivated by a spiritual heart. The view has been convincing to most churches who have rejected a cappella singing as the only form of music in worship. After the rejection of instruments of music by the Reformers (1400–1600 A.D.), there has been widespread adoption of instrumental music in Christian worship. Passages from Revelation in which “*harps*” were mentioned around the throne of God have been cited to strengthen the interpretation of ***psallo*** in Ephesians 5:19. (Note: In Revelation 14: 1–3, “. . . like that of harpists playing on their harps” was one of three descriptions of the voice that John heard (as the sound of many waters and like a loud peal of thunder) and the new song that was

sung by the redeemed. It is not stated that instruments were being played in heaven. The passage was describing the awesome, heavenly context. The sound effects preparing the readers' mind to grasp the awesomeness of redemption are the point of the passage.

- ▶ The Book of Revelation is best interpreted when the symbols are not interpreted literally but as “theater” to prepare the reader or listener to focus on the central message. Symbols provide the context to embellish the message, not to convey a message. The symbolism of “*harps*” in heaven in other passages was to set the tone for the occasion. The symbolism ends by saying “... *they sang a new song*.” We confuse the purpose of the passage by literalizing the symbolic language of the text (cf. Revelation 5:8, 15:2).
- ▶ Others would translate the same term as singing and “*psalming in the heart*.” This view understands Paul making two statements: worshipers are to verbalize their praise in singing that comes from the meditations of the heart. The “*heart*” is the needed context to explain the meaning of *psallo* in this passage. The “*making melody*” was in the heart and expressed outwardly in song. Buttressing this understanding is the fact that the instruments of music, religiously, were focused in the temple during the offering of the burnt offerings and were not used in the congregational assemblies (synagogues).
- ▶ Of even greater implication, the Levitical priesthood was changed in Jesus (cf. Hebrews 5:6, 10, 7:11). With a change of priesthood came a change of Law (covenant), with its “*regulations of worship*” and its ordinances (cf. Hebrews 9:1). He became the sufficient sacrifice for all time, eliminating the elaborate sacrificial ordinances (cf. Hebrews 10:11–14). With the temple and the Levitical priesthood being replaced so would the ordinances of

temple worship be terminated, along with the priestly playing of instruments. A new heavenly sanctuary for Christians was announced (cf. Hebrews 7:12, 8:5, 9:24). A continuity of prayer and singing, of responsible giving, and instruction of the saints were clearly embraced in the emerging, Christian congregations. In effect, they would continue on the centuries old practices of the Jewish synagogues which never used instruments of music in their local meetings.

- ▶ Additionally the absence of worshipers using instruments of music in the first 500 years into the history of Christianity would confirm the a cappella interpretation of Ephesians 5:19. It is interesting that still today after having rejected instrumental music in the worship service in the Great Schism, in 1000 A.D. the Greek Orthodox church with its 100,000,000 members continues its historic rejection of instruments of music in the worship assembly.
- ▶ It is interesting to note that the major lexicons translate *psallo* as “*making melody*” in the heart. Similarly, English translators have uniformly translated *psallo* to favor an a cappella interpretation (for example KJV, Douy, EV, ASV, NIV, Goodspeed, Moffatt, Weymouth, Knox, and many others). The term occurs five times in the New Testament: Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15 (x2); Ephesians 5:19; James 5:13.

- **Colossians 3:16:**

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you

sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

This passage does not have the controversial word, *psallo*, as a verb of action as in Ephesians 5:19. It features the forms of songs that can be sung: “*. . . psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*” The “*psalms*,” like the “*psalms*” of David, are to be sung, most likely in Jewish times as chants. This passage seems to parallel the a cappella understanding of Ephesians 5:19.

In summary, the “puzzle” over the absence of instrumental music in early Christianity is no puzzle at all. There was no Levitical priesthood, no burnt offerings, no temple, no ordinances of worship, including no use of instruments of music in worship. There was a discontinuity of the priesthood, replaced by the Priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchizedek. Since there was no Levitical priesthood, there was a discontinuity of the sacrificial offerings. Replacing the animal offerings was the supreme sacrifice of Jesus. There was a discontinuity of the temple and its worship, both from the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and with its destruction in A.D. 70 by the Roman legions. In its place in the ancient city of Jerusalem there was the heavenly sanctuary to which autonomous and independent congregations of worshipers, rising up around the world, set their eyes. Functioning much like worshipers in the synagogues, they offered up their praise in song, their prayers like incense and becoming preaching, teaching, and ministry oriented both in their assemblies and activities among the populations.

Those using instruments today in their worship services, anywhere in the world, do so ignoring the connection to the temple and the offering of burnt sacrifices and centuries of non use by apostolic guidance (cf. Ephesians 5:19). The basis today for using instruments in worship outside the temple is as strong

as offering animal sacrifices and burning incense. A fuller knowledge and recognition of the priesthood of Christ, the abolition of temple sacrifices and ordinances, and even the specified use of instruments in the Old Testament would preclude similar uses today. The pop-gospel songs now being played throughout the worship services of churches with many instruments ignore the way instruments were used in the temple worship and their dependence on the temple.

Conclusion: The Central Importance of Worship

Whatever the sermon, the song, or the prayer, the exaltation of God must be the focus. People must leave the assembly having experienced, again and again, the temple-like presence of God, with all of its intended, life-changing results. This is the dynamic out of which strong churches arise and viable leaders grow. Remember this one sentence: **Leader strong churches make the temple-like presence of God a major, recurring experience for every member.** Christian worship focuses on the enduring Priesthood of Christ and on His sacrifice. This focus would require replacing the temple with the local church as the locus of corporate, Christian worship. That worship would be characterized by the “ordinances” of worship established and practiced from apostolic times.

Preview of the Next Chapter: **Leader Strong Churches Understand the** **Church Must Be Reaching the Lost**

As Jesus came to seek and save the lost, so His followers must have the same spirit and priority. The Church is a preaching enterprise. Its obedience and growth are inseparable from its focus on winning souls, near and far. This next study explores the motives and methods of a soul-winning church.

Leader Strong Churches Understand The Church Must Be Reaching the Lost

The motto written over the threshold entry of a healthy, growing church might read: “Enter to Worship and Learn, Leave to Love and Share.” Loving and sharing means helping the needy and rescuing lost souls. Together, the two initiatives represent the best work of the hands and the hearts of the redeemed in regard to those trying to survive without Christ. A church who does not reach out consistently to the multitudes of lost in the population is, or will soon become, self-centered. The baptisms of their own children will not often be enough to keep them from declining in number and strength. A church who has no hands and heart to love and share with the lost will even lose a high percentage of their own children to the world they were supposed to gain in the Gospel. All of this says that Jesus never intended for His people to gaze at their own importance and focus on their own needs. The Church was specifically conceived as a Body of believers serving with Christ in giving the world a taste of unselfish love and an invitation to find a safe and healthy place where the presence of God would be felt in a fellowship of loving, grateful followers of Christ.

What Would Such a Church Look Like?

Notice the following basic characteristics of soul winning churches around the world:

- A soul-winning church will hear evangelistic messages regularly from the local pulpit. Right or wrong, the preacher has the eyes and ears of the congregation by virtue of the preaching assignment. The church will be as evangelistic as it is challenged to be by the evangelistic preaching.
- The church will spend more time in the Word. She not only will spend more hours in reading the Word, but will study the Scriptures more from the vantage point of evangelism. The Book of Acts is the classic book on evangelism and church planting. Jesus was the Evangelist of Galilee and the Apostle Paul was ever traveling in search of souls.
- A church will become more driven and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. As long as the early church yielded to the Spirit and took His sword into battle, the faster she grew. The church in the 21st century must not be as ignorant of the Holy Spirit as were those disciples at Ephesus in Acts 19:1–2.
- The church will be given more teaching on the stewardship of time and money to combat the materialism that has too many Christians in its grip. Selfless stewardship infuses the joy of giving and the excitement of seeing what increased giving can do for a body. Spiritual people get excited and more convicted in giving when more of it is directed to soul winning than to bricks and mortar.
- The church will focus her attention on the big picture, the most pressing priorities, and the most essential matters in life and faith. Every time a church lets herself become engrossed in things that will amount to nothing five minutes after her members are dead, she becomes that much less a soul-searching church. If negative views become her mantra, the fervor for soul winning dries up to nothing.

- The church will stretch her sights, enlarge her vision and lift her horizons to know that she is to be global in her evangelistic outreach. It was “*the whole world*” and “*every creature*” to whom Jesus assigned the Church to take the Gospel (cf. Mark 16:15). To be sure, being the brightest at home enables a church to throw the light further, but this is not an “either-or” situation. A church must be committed to both a local, evangelistic fervor and a global outreach.
- A church will have leaders who are united in firmly believing in each of the above statements and urging the fellowship of believers to pursue each of these realities.

Jesus left this earth wanting His disciples to share with Him in a world-wide enterprise dedicated to saving every soul possible in every nation and in every tribe. He sits in glory with the pointed desire that every convert be brought to fullness in Christ and every local church become a healthy, thriving, and growing people. He yearns to see His world brought to the enjoyment of grace through global preaching and Church growth.

The Beginning Place in Being a Soul Winning Church

Continuing the Legacy of the Great Commission

Two millenniums have passed but the words of Jesus are still compelling to believers and must be taught to a whole, new generation of spokesmen of the Word. His words must be taught and obeyed!

- The Great Commission of Matthew 28:18–20 and Mark 16:15–16 still authorizes global, all-inclusive evangelism and disciple making. No nation must be bypassed, despite

the difficulties of entry, or the time and problems required for sowing and harvesting, or the threats and prohibitions against preaching or the financial costs to complete the Commission. No nation is exempt for which the Church must pray, for which workmen are prepared, for which a strategic advance is planned, or for which the Church determines to claim for Christ.

- No ethnic group and no individuals are excluded in evangelistic planning because of an outward condition or seemingly difficulty in sharing the Gospel. The Church must understand the difficulties of the human condition but refuse to make a decision for any lost person by what is seen or feared. The Church must envision every group and every person as a potential disciple of Jesus. Because of the Great Commission every person is considered a compelling reason for intense efforts to save his or her soul so as to follow Jesus faithfully throughout all of life. All spokesmen of the Word must be trained to have the same vision, motives, and commitments to the lost.
- The Great Commission still authorizes effective ministry training and powerful, persuasive, convincing, and convicting Gospel proclamation. If the Gospel is to be taken to every ethnic group so the throne in heaven will be surrounded by people from every nation, language, and tribe, men must be trained in every place to reach out to people of their own culture. To be most effective men must be trained in their own language, in their own culture, to remain and preach in their own national circumstances. Churches of one nation cannot and should not supply all of the preaching for the world when men of every nation and of every ethnic group can be effectively trained to go more quickly, to speak more convincingly, and to stay more focused on the responses of the lost. Beyond an issue of reduced financial costs there is the urgency of going quickly to the lost, speaking to them even in the local

dialects, understanding all the cultural obstacles, and remaining long enough to complete the intent of the Commission. The most convicting messages calling for repentance and obedience to the Gospel are those best expressed in immediately understandable words and coming from a disciplined heart of understanding.

- The Great Commission still authorizes church planting and church growth in every culture. Being implicit in the Great Commission and illustrated in the Book of Acts, church planting must continue to be at the forefront of the agenda of the Church of the twenty-first century. From the establishment of the first Church until now, churches are the focal point of God's action and the most visible evidence that Jesus is still on the throne as the Commander of the Kingdom campaigns. Churches worshiping in every language on earth, dressing and living in their own culture, but honoring and changing the content of their secular culture in the name of Jesus give voice to the reality and vitality of the Commission.
- The Great Commission still assures faithful believers of the empowering presence of Jesus as they go about the search for lost souls on every continent. Planning and going to mission fields with the limits of man's own strength raise quick and insurmountable barriers to planting healthy and fruitful churches. Recruiting workers to go as church planters based on the known resources has limited appeal. Ministry training based on the poverty of mankind's human resources sends men out to face the extraordinary resources of evil with the certainty of inevitable defeat. Long term commitments and fruitful ministries are not to be expected unless the empowerment of Jesus is believed to be available and tenaciously sought. Through the confirmations of studied obedience to the will of God the Church can know of the abiding, empowering presence of the LORD and regularly do things beyond

herself with eternal outcomes (cf. John 10:1–15). He has promised to be with Great Commission people throughout the age of sowing and harvesting. This trust must be ingrained into the hearts of all believers.

Evangelism and Ministry Giftedness

Just as “*... let us do good to all people*” (Galatians 6:10; cf. Luke 6:27–36;) is in the DNA of the Church, so is searching for the lost a primary goal of every member. Christians should use their Spirit-given gifts to point the lost to Jesus. That initiative comes out of one’s gratitude for the gracious, salvation gift of God. After the fearful abandonment of the Aramean camp, the leprous men in 2 Kings 7:9 felt that it was not right that they alone should enjoy the abundance left by the fleeing soldiers. So must the saved want “*all people*” to enjoy the wonders of salvation. Knowing what is known of the eternal suffering awaiting the disobedient, like the rich man in Luke 16:19–31, all believers would want all others to become obedient and not be destined to eternal separation from God. Though soul winning is the business of the whole church, there are some, about 10% of the typical church, who are specifically gifted in evangelism as one of their primary gifts. This gift is not determined by gender, education, health, or age. It is a gift of God to His elect people. Knowing this what should the church leaders do?

By ministry profiling, leaders need to identify each member with the primary gift of evangelism and begin a specific training program to help each gifted member in soul winning. That training should widen to include members who have received evangelism as their secondary or tertiary ministry gift. Then, thoughtfully chosen and well funded evangelistic programs should be launched and carefully coordinated with the gifted and well trained members. Other members with other ministry gifts could provide support and encouragement to

those leading the evangelistic thrust of the church (cf. Romans 12:6–8, Ephesians 4:11ff, 1 Peter 4:10).

What Could Be Some of the Activities of a Soul Winning Church?

It has long been observed that the passion of a young lover turns him into a poet. Likewise, leaders with the passion of evangelism will find ways to be soul winners. God faithfully provides the opportunities to those who are passionate and gifted in evangelism. Every local situation will be different in the kinds of opportunities to reach the lost. Some of those opportunities will be as follows:

- Establish a systematic plan to urge the whole church to host a Bible study in their homes or refer friends to the evangelistic leaders. Send personal letters to referred prospects.
- Create a distribution plan to advertise free home studies, correspondence studies, a radio or television program.
- Plan a community school supplies and/or food bank give away with invitations to study the Bible.
- Plan a prison ministry, juvenile hall outreach effort, or near campus school program.
- Expect the preacher to have evangelistic series to inform and charge the church to be evangelistic.
- Have a family night meal program for citizens surrounding the building with the opportunity to teach individuals who show interest.
- Develop a robust foreign mission program to be lovers of the lost around the world. Invite missionaries in as often as possible to share “what the Lord has done.”

- Offer counseling in areas of congregational expertise: pre-marital, marital, parenting, financial, conflict and anger management, homemaking, and other areas.
- Periodically, plan a city wide evangelistic campaign and a systematic follow-up effort.
- Keep the evangelistic church before the public with billboards, television, radio and newspaper ads, and with every other means possible.
- Build the passion of evangelism into the vision, purpose, and goals of the church and keep the statements before the congregation.
- Plan on evenings or twenty-four hour prayer campaigns (include prayer and fasting vigils) for the lost of the world. The elders must be praying at every meeting for the souls of prospects and for the efforts of the local church to reach the lost.
- Search all past contacts and records to make sure every prospect has been followed up with multiple efforts. Pursue every soul to the brink of hell!

What Are the Obstacles to Searching for Lost Souls?

Satan feverishly throws constantly moving obstacles in the paths of soul winners to keep lost souls from hearing or being impressed with the Gospel. The church has to have motives higher than any obstacle and faith stronger than any opposition designed by Satan.

The Enemy Is Without:

- The Church competes against all the allurements in the world, all the material wants and pleasures, all the pressures to survive or progress, all the systematic efforts

- to discredit the Gospel message and messengers, and all the substitutions to meet human needs.
- The Church struggles to appeal to a world full of good, religious people who have placed their hope in a false message and religious system. They are saved only in their own minds.
 - The fear of death and the toll of guilt tightly grip countless millions, squeezing out any hope of freedom.
 - The bosom of wealth and the drunkenness of power leave many without any sense of need until all is lost.
 - The wretchedness of poverty, the enslavement of compulsive behaviors, and the sense of worthlessness drown many, leaving no strength to reach out for help.

The Enemy Is Within:

- A church can lose her focus on one of her prime purposes for existing and getting out of balance in her Christ-given mandates. She can begin to focus on her own comforts and feed her own pride leaving the lost without a message or hope.
- A church can get so busy “majoring in minors and minoring in majors” that soul winning is largely neglected except, perhaps, among the children of the members.
- A church can exclude foreign missions by arguing that Judea is first and never going to Samaria or the uttermost parts of the earth and even leaving Judea largely untouched.

A local church’s budget can be an accurate truth-finder as to the conviction and passion in soul winning. The Great Commission will never be fulfilled in Judea, Samaria, or the uttermost parts of the earth if the church focuses more on personal comfort and self-serving activities than she does on soul winning.

What Are the Motives for a Search of the Lost?

The fundamental and primary reason to make soul winning a high priority in Christian service and living is because Jesus, our LORD, with the full authority of heaven, told His disciples to speed the Good News to every place where people live and to every living person on the earth in every generation until He comes again. To do any less is either defiance or indifference to His awesome authority:

. . . “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
(Matthew 28:18–20).

. . . “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation . . .” (Mark 16:15).

- His command was clear — the Gospel must “go” to every place and every person.
- The duration of the command was clear — until He comes again.
- The content to be preached was clear — the Good News is salvation in Him.
- The resources to be used were clear — Jesus and all of His might would be with those who seek the souls of men.
- Simply put — He said it! We obey Him! That is it!

There are some secondary motives:

- Out of gratitude for their own salvation, Christian cannot **not** share the Good News with others in need of grace.

- Christians know the incredible blessings that come to those being saved and in following Jesus. The saved would not be so selfish as to fail to share those blessings with others.
- The health of a growing church is directly dependent on continual, new births of the saved.
- The most “on fire” members who understand the feelings of the lost are those just rescued from the threatening horrors facing the lost. That means there is the necessity of an inflow of newly converted souls to reach out to their circles of friends who are without Jesus.
- God has gifted every new convert and, by that giftedness, has assigned each one specific ministries within the Body. Without them the church is crippled in its ministries.

Conclusion

Constrained by the evidence for the deity of Jesus, consumed by the redemptive nature of the cross, and overwhelmed by the power of the resurrection every church leader should thrill at the hearing of the global commission. Christians take great courage at the diligent and passionate fulfillment in the evangelistic history of the Church made possible by the dedication of churches, faithful to the challenges of the Great Commission.

**Preview of the Next Chapter:
Leader Strong Churches Understand
The Church Must Be Doing Good to Others**

The Church is not only a preaching force of a Spirit revealed, objective message of salvation but a helping hand to those in need. Matching the biblical mandate to “*Preach the Word . . .*” is the judgment prerequisite of clothing the naked, feeding the poor, and visiting those in prison (cf. 2 Timothy 4:2). Doing good to the needy constitutes “*pure and undefiled religion*” (James 1:27). The next chapter will speak of how important doing good is for the growth of the local church.

Leader Strong Churches Understand The Church Must Be “Doing Good” to Others

What a delight it must have been for Isaiah to go into the temple-like presence of God and to be struck by His awesome holiness. With that view of God’s royalty and holiness nothing but worship could erupt. His holiness convicts Christians of their need for salvation and of knowing of His saving grace. What a delight it can be to share the Good News of the salvation in Christ to the lost of the world. These temple-like experiences thrill His Saints in leading other believers more deeply into the presence of God.

In the Isaiah temple account, the Church today could find the essence of her four-fold mission and even her nature: holiness, worship, evangelism, and edification. This study is about finding similar delight in “*doing good*” to others and seeing the Church as having a five-fold mission: holiness, worship, evangelism, edification, and “*doing good*.”

The Biblical Basis of “*Doing Good*”

Jesus described His earthly mission with the reading of Isaiah 61:1–2:

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to

proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion . . .

Jesus, as described by Peter in Acts 10:38, devoted much time in His ministry “. . . ***doing good*** . . . ” Among His parables, “*doing good*” to others was a dominant theme as in the parable of The Good Samaritan (cf. Luke 1:25–37). His healing ministry served to authenticate His Messianic mission, but secondarily was all about “*doing good*” to others (cf. Matthew 4:23–24; Matthew 9: the paralyzed man, raising a dead child, healing a sick woman, healing the blind and mute). Much of His other teachings focused on being the servant to others, meeting their needs through “*doing good*” (cf. Luke 6:27–36). In the judgment scene in Matthew 25:31–46, Jesus, the King, showed serious concern for how the hungry were fed, the thirsty were given drink, the strangers and travelers were received, those needing clothing were clothed, and how the sick and those in prison were attended. Being accepted in glory would weigh heavily on “*doing good*” to others.

Paul commended the brothers in Galatia on their care for him when he was sick among them (cf. Galatians 4:13–15). He frequently urged the brothers in Galatia to do good to all, whether in the family of God or in the world (cf. Galatians 6:9–10). His list of character qualities in Galatians 5:22–23 all benefit those in need.

It is no wonder that one of the servant traits of an elder of God’s people is to be hospitable, which is properly translated, “lover of strangers” (cf. 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). Men grow into strong leaders who are raised in a church that is sensitive to the needs of others and gives a high priority in the use of their resources to help people in need.

What Is “*Doing Good*” in Our Society?

Jesus spoke of His *disciples being the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world.”* It is easy to think of those functions as being particularly related to morality and preaching the truth. Certainly, Christians do bring healing and light to a sick and darkened world, but both descriptions would include “*doing good*” to others wherever Christians go.

“*Doing good*” in the 21st century is as diverse as are the numerous human needs around us. Yet, human needs are not much different now than they have been in every century since Jesus put “*doing good*” among the top concerns of His followers. He named a few such needs as those needing food, drink, clothing, and care in physical ailments; those who were in prison, being oppressed, having traveling needs, and those who were sick (cf. Luke 4:18–19; Matthew 25:34–36). The complexities of society take heavy tolls on the emotional, relational, and material resources of the people, increasing the needs to be met by an increasing involvement of caring and trained Christians.

“*Doing Good*” and Ministry Giftedness

One of the greatest of the Church’s rediscoveries in this beginning of the third millennium A.D. is that every believer is gifted in ministry (cf. Romans 12:6–8). Each gift is a Kingdom assignment to help the Church grow. Most members have primary gifts (usually at least three), with a special measure of passion to help each member develop the gifts well, use it faithfully, and use it fruitfully with endless joy. One of the gifts is being a servant. With this gift a person finds endless joy and opportunity to serve others. They serve long and well without a need for recognition. “*Doing good*” for the one with a servant gift is deeply a part of their identity and personhood. They

excel in “*doing good*” to others. Yet, “*doing good*” should be deeply a part of the DNA of all members. No member is exempt from “*doing good*” to others. Rather, every member is to discover which gifts God has given, develop them all, but particularly the primary gifts and employ them in “*doing good*.” Every gift is a gift of ministry, and thus, can be used for “*doing good*” to others:

- The gift of **evangelism** compels one to do good to others in sharing the saving Word with the lost.
- The gift of **confrontation** compels one to do good to others in alerting them to dangers.
- The gift of **research** compels one to dig deeply for truths to share.
- The gift of **exhortation** compels one to encourage through instruction.
- The gift of **shepherding** compels one to guide and protect people.
- The gift of **mercy** compels one to feel the hurts of people and care for them.
- The gift of **serving** compels one to look for ways to help people.
- The gift of **giving** compels one to be generous and innovative in giving of their resources.
- The gift of **administration** compels one to be visionary in organizing and leading a project.

The Dynamics of “*Doing Good*”

“*Doing good*” to others is not a natural action. From being an entirely self-centered and self-consuming infant one must grow in the ability to care. Being able to care for all kinds of people requires a maturing ability to be sensitive and sympathetic. In growing toward adulthood men pick up some

prejudices (prejudgments) that blunt or numb their sensitivities to some other people. These come either through misguided instruction, unfounded perceptions, or interpretations of hurtful events. Consequently, if man had a way to photograph his emotional body, there would be “numb spots” leaving him unable to feel any compassion for some who suffer. Without any sense of wrong doing men are indifferent and aloof to the needs in the lives of others. The way to become a caring person includes specific, growing stages:

- One should begin to examine past confrontations with instructions, perceptions, and interpretations to confirm whether they are true or false. Some will be true, corresponding to reality and fact. They are what they are, with no justifications. Some will be seen to be false messages that have been delivered and believed as truth. Some studies have confirmed that humans are driven by perception more often than by truth.
- After examining past perceptions, then one needs to become an avowed custodian of truth, giving special attention to being correctly informed about the past conclusions that “numbed” one’s sensitivity to some others. Expanded to a wide range of situations, it is still true that “. . . *You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*” (John 8:32).
- Then one needs to put self where the rejected person is and try to capture his or her feelings whether it is pain, guilt, futility, depression, embarrassment, anger, or other emotions.
- Then one needs to try to understand why the person may have become embroiled or included in the rejected kind of people.

- Then one needs to divide between disapproving of sinful or hurtful actions and acceptance of the persons in terms of needed help as an individual.
- Then one needs to look on the person, not on merits which he may not have, but on what he could be in Christ Jesus.
- Then one needs to remember that such a one was created by God and God loved him and gave His Son for the likes of such people.

No one can be caring and happy in “*doing good*” except to a small circle of people that he fully approves of until he knows the truth, knows the individual, knows of his own weaknesses, and knows the transforming power of “*doing good*” to the glory of God.

The Values of “*Doing Good*”

“*Doing good*” is not just a series of good works on behalf of another. It must be free of any attitude that would distort or diminish the working of what is good. Good is to be done for “good’s sake.” “*Doing good*” is the end in itself. How one responds does not validate or diminish the good that is done. Christians may be saddened that those being helped do not show any gratitude or progress in their lives, but their response must not condition the zeal in “*doing good*.” Some of the saddest words spoken by Jesus was His comment, “*Where are the other nine?*” Only one leper returned to express gratitude, but Jesus kept on “*doing good*” to others. “*Doing good*” has its own values:

- “*Doing good*” glorifies God in the world. Being salt and light brings healing, flavor, and light to the world, but ultimately and primarily, it glorifies God.

- “*Doing good*” helps Christians identify with Jesus. Christians must line up their lives and motives with those of Jesus. Being Christ-like in opening up our hearts and reaching out our hands to others is the goal of every believer.
- “*Doing good*” helps Christians identify with those in need. Sharing resources Christians have received from God as His creation with other creations of God keeps the circle intact. We are all beneficiaries of divine grace. Holding back what does not belong to us from others of God’s created family who are in need is a denial of our creature status and holds others of God’s creation in contempt.
- “*Doing good*” helps Christians define the nature of the Faith. A faith without worship, evangelism, and edification is a distorted or mutilated faith. So also is a faith without recognizing how “*doing good*” to others is a vital part of the nature of the Christian faith.
- “*Doing good*” helps Christians value the worth of those in need. Beyond helping to solve an immediate need, “*doing good*” is a recognition of the intrinsic value of the individual being helped. The person is a son or daughter of the King. The person is an intended heir of the riches of grace.
- “*Doing good*” helps Christians express hope, not based on merit, but on potential. The biggest need of most people being helped is the ability to hope again. Many have tried to resolve the problem but have not succeeded. They not only have exhausted their resources, they have lost their hope. “*Doing good*” to such a one can be the beginning of hope, without which he or she cannot rise again.
- “*Doing good*” helps Christians infuse responsibility and accountability into the lives of those in need. Very often, the lack of being responsible and accountable is at the root of most failed attempts to be independent and productive.

Wise assistance that avoids the welfare trappings and honors the human dignity of the individual can become an incentive for becoming a responsible and accountable person.

- “*Doing good*” helps Christians build a bridge to those in need of being a new creature. The line between “*doing good*” and wanting the person to come back to the LORD in gratitude and become His follower is narrow but necessary to observe. Christians do good for good’s sake. Then, having offered unconditional love in “*doing good*” to others, we pray earnestly and extend an invitation to persons to follow Jesus into the presence of God and in doing to others as has been done to them.
- “*Doing good*” helps Christians gain a right view of service. Being served by others is not the desire or goal of a servant believer. Learning to serve unselfishly, motivated by unconditional love, does not come soon or easily. There are principles to guide one in gaining a right view of service. A study of the life ministry of Jesus is the core of that study and life style.
- “*Doing good*” helps Christians remember and understand their dependence on God. It does not take much for one to begin thinking that he can think himself, work himself and sacrifice enough to be self-made and a colossal success, independently successful and enviably remarkable. Reaching out to others as a servant one is reminded he did not get to the point of being able to give generously and often except by the blessings from God.

The Pitfalls of “*Doing Good*”

Going about “*doing good*” without an expectancy of personal gain or conditions being placed on those being helped

is a leading characteristic of Christian virtue at its best. Yet, dangers lurk on the way into the lives of others. The ministry of “*doing good*” is not without threatened losses. It is possible to distort the redemptive values of “*doing good*. ” Note some pitfalls to guard against:

- Pride in giving — There are many ways that men can “... *announce it with trumpets* . . .” when they give to the needy so as to be lauded by men (cf. Matthew 6:2). Putting the good done to others as it were in a resume, indulging in self-applauding how one has helped others, doing things for the purpose of being cited for the good that is done are common ways men are driven by pride. God looks the other way in disgust at such a sordid motive for “*doing good*” to others.
- Control of those being helped — Putting people in one’s debt, reminding them of how much has been given, putting selfish stipulations on the help given, expressing resentfulness when expectations are not made, and demanding demeaning and detailed reports on the use of the gifts in the name of responsible stewardship take away the beauty of “*doing good*” for others.
- Compensating for other failures — “*Doing good*” to others does not take the place of failures in other areas of life. “*Doing good*” to others does not remove the need for repentance in moral failures, relationship breaches, and irresponsible stewardship.
- Condescending in doing good — “*Doing good*” is to be done in the spirit of servanthood, not as the rich looking down on the poor, the achiever looking down on the failure, or the worthy looking down on the unworthy. “*Doing good*” as a servant is looking up, grateful to be able to offer some meaningful gift to one of God’s creation.

- Justification for guilt — “*Doing good*” has no intended, atoning value. Only by trusting in the Christ and in His sacrificial blood can one be justified. Doing all the good in the world all the time does not remove one sin from judgment. “*Doing good*” is neither a license to sin nor a solution to sinning. Such actions can best be described as hypocrisy from the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 6:1–3).

“*Doing Good*” on a Daily Basis

Leader strong churches search for ways to do good in their community and in their world. “*Doing good*” is what they are and what they do.

- Leader strong churches develop their annual budget to have funding available to seize every opportunity to do good. Many opportunities will be what they foresee but others will blossom over night and will need immediate and decisive attention.
- Leader strong churches encourage and involve the members in continual and widespread efforts of “*doing good*.” The more the church reaches out the more there will be opportunities to do good for others. The church will become known as “that church that does good.”
- The members who reach out in love and touch the needs of others will find a sense of personal value, a sense of fulfillment, and will, in some of the cases, establish relationships that are rich and meaningful.
- Leader strong churches commonly will have:
 - ▶ A well and freshly stocked pantry of food and a wide variety of clothing.
 - ▶ A voucher program to help with transportation and food needs.

- ▶ A meal-a-week program for the community, with special activities for kids.
- ▶ A Christians in Action summer effort to help others in the community.
- ▶ A widow-assistance program of visiting and repairing houses, and supplying other needs.
- ▶ A near-campus program to reach out to students on the margins.
- ▶ A prison ministry that includes assistance to families of inmates.
- ▶ A school supplies give away in the Fall.
- ▶ A needy family gift program at Christmas, including sponsoring a hospital pediatric ward.
- ▶ Responding to family tragedies such as home fires, accidents, deaths, extended sicknesses, and other occurrences.
- ▶ Sponsoring children’s homes and assisted living homes, responding to their stated needs.
- ▶ Being partners in efforts responding to natural tragedies such as floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, and other disasters within a community.
- ▶ Community clean up days, providing help to low income needs in summer and winter, and providing “skill days,” volunteering as local school mentors.
- ▶ Building homes, providing Camp scholarships.
- ▶ Creating an assistance program for unemployed members.

All of the above and more will open doors to greater evangelism and will glorify God. However, the first purpose is to “*do good to others*.” One in ten of those helped (as in the parable of the ten cleansed lepers) will respond positively, but the church carried out its purpose and good was done. The church will still evangelize, knowing that all of the good done

will not save one person without that one person hearing, believing and obeying the Gospel.

Conclusion

A worshiping, preaching, and teaching church that is “*doing good*” to those around them will be growing as a church and developing strong leaders. By their holy lives and helping hands they will confirm themselves as followers of Christ. They will show that Christ is relative to the needs of the modern world. They will make evangelism and salvation, holy living and worship, growing in Christ and doing good to be exactly why Christians are unique, inviting, and happily fulfilled.

Preview of the Next Chapter: **Leaders Strong Churches Understand The** **Church Must Be Eagerly Awaiting the** **Coming Savior**

While the Church tirelessly fulfills its mandate in worshiping, preaching, “*doing good*” to others, and being holy in life she eagerly awaits the promised return of her LORD and Master. His anticipated return gives urgency, purpose, importance, and joy to every endeavor. This chapter will challenge the student to let the certainty of Christ’s return become a significant part of his plans, his efforts, and measuring the results of every endeavor.

Leader Strong Churches Understand The Church Must Be Eagerly Awaiting the Coming Savior

A church without a passion for the Second Coming of Christ, a vision of a Coming Savior, will not be a “going church,” a church “going” in search of the lost. She may be a moral church for the inherent values of morality. She may be a benevolent church because of an identity with those who suffer. More than likely she will be a self-absorbed church, focused on immediate, selfish concerns. Too often a church without the vision of the Coming Savior will be legalistic and focused on the doctrinal errors of others with very little self-scrutiny. An ardent belief in the Second Coming of Christ gives a sense of urgency and a compelling purpose to all-important aspects of a growing church.

Perhaps, there is no biblical question so much in contention in this 21st century as the prophecies in the New Testament concerning the Coming of Jesus. The Preterists (partial or full) say that all such prophesies were fulfilled in and around the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The Historists teach that all the prophesies were fulfilled along the course of Roman historical events. The Futurists understand the prophesies as yet to be fulfilled in their entirety as “end-time” events. Then, there is a host of other views such as millennialists of different shades (pre, post, and others), dispensationalists, and endless discussions on interpretive rules covering prophecies.

The certainty of the Coming of Christ began to be questioned in the early years after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

- Because of a delay in time to what some were expecting for the return of Christ, some began to doubt if He was coming at all. This doubt arose either because they had misunderstood the nature and timing of the promise or they were questioning the authority of Jesus to make such a daring promise.
- Others were beginning to say that He had already come and there would not be a resurrection.

If some had difficulty so near to the times in which the promises were made, Christians could hardly hope for complete and unified understanding two millenniums later.

General Guidelines

Not to minimize any revelation of truth among the contending views or to discourage honest study to know what Jesus promised, a growing church would do well in not getting deeply consumed in the inevitable conflicts. The following are some suggestions:

- Try to stand in the audience of those who first heard the promises of Jesus and ask what they may have understood.
- Pay attention to the questions being asked and take careful note as to the answers given to the specific questions.
- Weigh carefully the nature of the genre of the writing, letting that observation give direction to an interpretation (for example: symbolic, literal, historical, poetic, apocalyptic, and others).

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- Most of the differing and frequently contradictory views come out of a difficulty to explain one statement and forcing all other passages to yield to the proposed solution of the impasse.
- Research the key passages that trouble most interpreters and determine what was being said at the time and to what audience, realizing that most of the divergent views start with a misunderstanding of the context.
- There is something to be said about conflicting views of recent origin that repute to correct the views traced back to the earliest centuries.

This chapter will leave many pertinent questions for others to answer who have a different purpose than presented in this writing. Those questions would be:

Is Jesus in fact coming?

What do the Scriptures say about when He is coming?

What do historians say about any surrounding events?

What is being said by conflicting interpreters?

The following observations are based on the belief that from the moment Jesus made a promise, the promise had its signal to begin a march toward fulfillment according to God's divine power and plan. Thus:

- Jesus died, was buried, and rose from the dead exactly when and as He promised.
- The Spirit inaugurated the Christian covenant through the apostolic witness and proclamation on Pentecost in Acts 2.
- The Jewish, religious leaders rejected the Messiahship of Jesus and forfeited their unique role as God's chosen people.

- The Jews were stripped of their unique relationship with God as confirmed by the destruction of the temple and the ancient city of God in A.D. 70 by the Roman legions.
- The Message of Christ was preached in every nation, beginning in Jerusalem, extending God's grace to every lost person.
- Jesus will return as He ascended into the heavens. Time is not the crucial element. What is crucial is the fact that God yearns for all to repent (cf. Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9).

What Are the Dynamics of Believing in the Second Coming of Jesus?

When the Second Coming of Christ is not preached because of the failure to understand its importance or only preached to refute the assumed errors being widely preached, there are crucial losses in the spiritual life of the Church. The End Time Coming of Christ is a call to some of the richest values of the Christian faith:

- **A Call to Understanding God** — It is imperative that God be more understood in His essential nature. Christians cannot have a fuller relationship with Him if they do not understand His nature, His purposes, and His character. As the Creator, He intervenes in human affairs. He has a will and a plan for mankind and He takes them seriously. Because He is the author and defender of truth (cf. Hebrews 12:2), His judgment on the lovers of error is necessary. Because He is the antithesis of sin, His judgment is required. Despite the necessity of accountability, He tempers judgment with grace and mercy (cf. James 2:13). He wants everyone to be saved and to enjoy fullness in His Son (cf. 1 Timothy 2:4).

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- **A Call to the Distracted and Defiant** — The stark reminder that all men will stand before God at the Second Coming of Christ strikes the conscience of those who are trying to live as if there is no God or One who will not hold all men accountable. The reality of the Coming has the power to strike to the depths of one's efforts to ignore God. Ambivalence in emphatically preaching that God's judgment at the Second Coming of Christ will surely take place steals away the urgency of self-scrutiny and living an accountable life of obedience to God and service to others (cf. Matthew 24:31–46).
- **A Call to Repentance and Obedience** — When there is no penalty to pay for sinful living or no overwhelming joys to receive, the pleasures of this world take on a beauty far beyond reality. Knowing something of the fear of falling into the hands of an angry God grips the thoughts of sinful man so that he cries out "What must I do to be saved?" The changing of the mind that results in a change of life through repentance costs little in comparison to the grandeur of an obedient choice.
- **A Call to Hope and Assurance** — The prospect of judgment when there is a focus on the Second Coming crushes all human self-assurance and human pride. The certainty of judgment leaves everyone naked, hopeless, and defenseless before an expectant God. However, a returning Savior coming to collect His own gives rise to exuberant hope. Being claimed by a loving Savior gives assurance of eternal life when there is no assurance in anyone else (cf. John 14:6).
- **A Call to Purpose and Service** — Belief in a Coming Savior gives urgency and value to devoting self to a purposeful life of loving service to dear brethren and all those in need (cf. Galatians 6:10). An appointment of certainty burns away the selfishness of working hard to

gather a collection of stuff that loses all of its value moments after death. The reality of a time of accountability leads to a discovery of the joys in serving others. It changes the meaning of a successful life from seeing who has collected the most toys at the end of life to who has unselfishly devoted his life for the good of others and to the glory of God.

- **A Call to Vision and Clarity** — Not many people clearly see the outcomes of their efforts and life. Most people experience many stops and turns, reversals and retreats. No one goes to heaven in a straight line but, despite the obstacles, having a vision of the “end times” keeps one moving forward to meet the Savior at the finish line (cf. Hebrews 12:1–2; Philippians 3:12–14). To make every blow count, to use every resource well, and to make the most of the opportunities each receives one must have an ultimate goal. Meeting Jesus in the resurrection morn at His Coming serves well as a call to the saints across the centuries.
- **A Call to Resolve and Action** — Having a day for accounting, be it a final exam in college or a deadline on the job, people more easily resolve to finish a job and find the discipline to keep moving forward to the day of reckoning. The grand finale foreseen in the Coming of Christ and the judgment day provides a stimulus to resolve to be ready and to work untiringly toward the ultimate goal of the soul (cf. 2 Peter 3:10–14). Who would dare be slack in his work or indifferent with such a glorious meeting being remembered each day?
- **A Call to Piety and Worship** — Knowing that one is scheduled at the Coming of the LORD to stand before a Holy God and worship Him with the saved of the ages gives a forceful impetus toward denying self of the desires of the flesh that war against the soul. Being certain in

one's salvation and understanding the grace and mercy of God in redeeming sinners from certain ruin pours out in adoration, praise, and thanksgiving in worshiping the Savior (cf. 1 Peter 1:13–21).

- **A Call to Vigorous, Global Evangelism** — While salvation is freely given through the sacrifice of Jesus, grateful saints long to present themselves in the final day with fruits of righteousness. One of the surest fruits that pleases God is bringing other souls to Him. It pleases God to no end to populate heaven with those who followed Jesus through life and death (cf. 2 Peter 3:9)
- **A Call to Comfort and Gladness** — How could the martyrs of the ages or any saint under duress find the strength to be faithful even to the point of death? How can so many believers work long and hard throughout their lives without applause or enjoy any margins of relief? It is the belief in the *maranatha*, in the “Come, LORD Jesus. Come quickly!” of the Christian faith. It is in the assurance of His Coming and the welcome applause in the throne room where one finds comfort in trials and gladness in suffering:

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him (James 1:12).

- **A Call to Judgment and Accountability** — The focus of the final Coming of the Messiah will be calling all men to account for the way they treated the Lamb of God. It will be then that the blood of Jesus will take on its greatest significance. Those wearing the robes of righteousness ennobled by the blood of sacrifice will be called to their longed-for embrace of the Savior. Those who have refused

the Lamb and His sacrifice and lived without its benefits will stand condemned and rejected by the One who most wanted to save them (cf. 2 Timothy 4:8; 1 Corinthians 16:22). The saved will praise the Judge-Savior forever for saving them from the wrath to come (cf. Revelation 7:9–10):

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy — to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen (Jude 24, 25).

What Is the Reality of the Coming of Christ?

In an overview of the Coming (s) of Christ it can be seen that they are multiple. He comes as the Messiah in fulfillment of Old Testament promises in the unfolding of the Scheme of Redemption. He comes in a display of power and presence. He comes in judgment, calling men to repentance or accountability. And He will come in a final call for all humanity to stand accountable before God to receive the welcome applause or to be banished from His presence. The Messianic Coming is accomplished reality. The Coming in a display of power was witnessed by thousands of Jews on Pentecost. The Judgment Comings of Christ are continuing throughout time as the reigning King dashes the sinful pursuits of men. Some examples would be the destruction of Jerusalem which rejected the Messiah, and destruction of the Roman Empire and many others who have stood against the Kingdom enterprise. There remains the final judgment return in the Coming of the King:

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- **The Old Testament Writers Pointed to the Redemptive Coming of the Messiah.**

- ▶ Genesis 3:15 shot the first ray of redemptive hope into the darkness of sin and separation enshrouding humanity.
- ▶ Job 19:25–27 gave a strong prophetic insight of the Coming Messiah.
- ▶ Isaiah and Jeremiah lavishly described the birth, lineage, mission, and death of the Messiah.
- ▶ Psalm 118:22–24 is one of many references to a day of new beginnings made possible by the accomplished mission of the Messiah.

The promise of the Coming of the Messiah provided a star of hope among the suffering Jews through all the centuries of sinful leadership, captivity, and threatened ruin. Their repentance, renewal, and faithfulness were tied inseparably to their belief in the Coming Messiah.

- **The New Testament Records the Reality of the Coming of the Messiah.**

- ▶ The reality was confirmed by the physical presence of Jesus, His miracles, His life, the cross, and His resurrection. All events and characteristics were pointedly prophesied with specificity and clarity.
- ▶ Jesus spoke of yet another Coming in the announcement of the Kingdom enterprise among men (cf. Mark 8:38–9:1), witnessed with the convicted preaching of the Spirit-endowed apostles in Acts 2.
- ▶ Jesus spoke of the judgment on Israel for their rejection of the divine gift of grace, with a mingling of outpourings of divine judgments (cf. Matthew 24).

- ▶ John 14:1–3 is punctuated by a promise of a Coming to be associated with an eternal home.
 - ▶ Act 1:11 quotes, the angels promising the yet-to-be experienced, physical Coming of Christ out of the skies into which He had gone.
 - ▶ Paul was focused on the Coming of the LORD, weaving references to it in ten of thirteen known books. In the two letters to the Thessalonians Paul said something about the Coming of the LORD, Jesus Christ in every chapter (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:15–18; 5:2–3, 23; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–10; 2:1–5, 8). Some interpreters mistake a belief in an imminent return of Jesus with Paul’s sense of certainty and urgency to so live as to be prepared for the Coming of Christ, even as a “*thief in the night*” (1 Thessalonians 5:2).
 - ▶ Peter described the drama of the Coming of the LORD in the dissolving of the elements and ushering in eternal reality (cf. 2 Peter 3:1–8).
 - ▶ John was inspired to draw a picture of God’s judgment on imperial Rome on His way to fully defeating Satan, the perpetrator of all evil, culminating in the summing up of all things by the “*KING of Kings and LORD of Lords*” (Revelation 19:16). The marvelous book closes, “... ‘Yes, I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).
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- **It Will Trigger a Momentous Series of Events**
Christ comes as a “*thief in the night*,” calling to Himself the righteous of the ages who will experience the power of His resurrection. He calls the masses together for the day of accountability, “calling the roll” of those who have been entered into the “*Lamb’s book of life*” (Revelation 21:27). The saints whose works will have gone before them for judgment will receive a long cherished welcome into the

city of God. Those who have rejected the overtures of grace will be banished from the only thing that counts — the eternal residence in the presence of the Omni-God of the universe.

Conclusion

Pulpits across the land are more silent in the 21st century than any other time in recent generations concerning the Second Coming of Christ. The costs of such silence are enormous: a staggering failure to grow, to fulfill its mandate to be holy, to evangelize the world, to serve with an eye to the skies, to live in hope of fulfilling the Church's purposes and reaching her eternal destiny. When the hearts of believers no longer visualize the pageantry of the LORD's Coming, the Church has abandoned her artillery in the Divine arsenal against sin. God will cease to be known throughout the land as a God of passion, judgment, and purpose. Little expectancy of the Second Coming dulls the urgency about anything that is central to the purposes of the Church: holiness, evangelism, worship, service, and Church growth. The Second Coming and judgment are inseparable; without their voices being heard there will be less passion in soul winning if souls are not in jeopardy. There can be little commitment to piety if believers are not concerned about the end of time. When the fire of the reality of the LORD's Coming burns deep in the hearts of the proclaimers in the pulpits a church will catch on fire and inflame the hearts of men. The reality of the final Coming of the LORD, preached and believed among the saints in every age, gives substance, urgency, passion, and finality to every endeavor.



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Truman Scott comes from a long line of church leaders, counting to at least five generations. His leadership training, at age thirteen, began in a local church leader training program and was mentored by a careful minister and encouraged by godly parents. The training continued in Freed Hardeman University (A.A.), Harding University (B.A. in Bible and Biblical Languages), Harding Graduate School of Bible and Religion (M.A. in Old Testament), and Bethany Theological Seminary (M.A. and Doctorate of Christian Counseling).

His ensuing, full-time ministry commitments have led him in local evangelism (six years), missionary work in Italy (eleven years), church elder (fifteen years), and an administrator and instructor at Sunset International Bible Institute in Lubbock, TX (twenty-five years). His ministry involvement includes being Director of Teen Bible Camps, author, publisher and co-owner of a publishing house, Director of a national Bible correspondence and advertising program, co-founder of a Christian Academy, and the author and editor of ministry themed books. He currently serves as a graduate instructor and administrative consultant for the Sunset International Bible Institute.

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