

Church Planting Institute
Your Church Can Grow



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Chapter One

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH WAS A GROWING CHURCH

The immediate, explosive and continuing growth of the early church emphasises several important truths.

1. GOD INTENDS HIS CHURCH TO GROW.

Everything which God plants is destined to grow. He is the author of growth and His skills are evident in all of nature. The Church is the true vine and God is the vine dresser. (John 15:1) He has ordained His Church to bear fruit in all the earth.

As soon as the New Testament church was planted, it began to grow.

One the first day, 3,000 souls were added to the church. (Acts. 2:41.)

Following a dynamic power encounter a further 5,000 men, (with how many women and children?) were added to the church. (Acts. 4:4.)

"And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women." (Acts.5:14.)

"Now in those days, the number of disciples was multiplying." (Acts. 6:1.)

"And the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem." (Acts. 6:7.)

"And the multitudes with one accord beeded the things spoken by Philip." (Acts 8:6)

"And many believed on the Lord." (Acts. 9:42.)

The history of the primitive early church is a record of consistent phenomenal growth, setting a pattern for the church throughout the ages.

2. IF JESUS TRULY BUILDS HIS CHURCH, IT WILL GROW.

Jesus said, *"I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* (Matt. 16:18.)

There are many opposing factors which would seek to hinder the growth and expansion of the church but when Jesus Himself builds it, not even the all the wisdom of hell and strategies of Satan can prevent the victory of the church.

Jesus must be the One who is building the Church.

It must be built according to His Divine pattern.

- Demons oppose its growth.
- Religious principalities resist it.
- Political ideologies try to prevent it.
- Intellectualism tries to block its path.
- Scepticism and philosophy endeavour to undermine it.
- Socially influential persons try to hinder its progress.
- Devotees of false religions attempt to block its onward march.

Even the very gates, (wisdom, strength, and power) of hell can never prevent the progress of the true church.

3. THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH IS A MODEL FOR ALL TIME.

The history of the early church, recorded in Acts, and the Epistles, is not merely a historic record of a unique phase of the Church's history, it is intended to be a pattern and a blue print for the Church throughout the ages.

4. FIRST CENTURY PRINCIPLES FOR A 20TH CENTURY CHURCH.

Obviously the style and methodology of the early church was especially appropriate for that time and location. There are definitely many cultural and contemporary features indicated in the account of its first years. However, there are also many timeless principles which may be adjusted and applied effectively at any time and in any place. We shall be looking at some of these aspects later in the course of this study. God's principles are changeless but His methods are not. We need to be "*anchored to the Rock but geared to the times.*"

5. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

One thing should be obvious to all but the most biased observer, and that it is that the Holy Spirit was obviously the life empowerment factor of the early church. He was the catalyst who stirred the early church.

He was the gentle breeze which spread the seed of God's Word far and wide.

He was the dynamic empowerment who motivated the first apostles.

His was the vital power which changed multitudes of lives.

The areas of the Church today which are presently experiencing the most dynamic and explosive growth, are those churches which honour the Holy Spirit and allow Him room and the right to exercise His sovereign will.

Unfortunately many Christians have labelled this stream, giving it various names such as "Pentecostal," or "Charismatic." This has tended to polarise the universal Church into charismatic and non-charismatic groupings, creating distinct segments and causing some non-charismatic groups to deny the Spirit any room or opportunity to express His authority. We must willingly acknowledge, whatever our doctrinal persuasion, that **THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE DYNAMIC LIFE OF THE CHURCH** and without His manifest presence the Church is like a grave yard. We must all allow God the Holy Spirit to take His rightful place in the Church.

6. JESUS CHRIST IS LORD OF HIS CHURCH.

The powerful emphasis of the first message ever proclaimed in the "Christian Church," was, "*God has made this same Jesus both LORD and Messiah.*" (Acts. 2:36.) This powerful proclamation was the launching pad for the Church age and remains the dominant emphasis of the true Church. To experience real success in Church Growth we must both acknowledge and proclaim the intrinsic truth of this. **We must allow Jesus the right to actually be the Lord of His Church and we must sublimate everything to His rule.**

- He is building HIS OWN Church.
- The Church which faithfully proclaims Him.
- The Church which fearlessly exalts Him.
- The Church which boldly acknowledges that HE is LORD

7. THE BIBLE IS THE AUTHENTIC PATTERN.

The modern church must get back to the Word of God and base its beliefs and practices on the Word alone. Too many seminaries and Bible colleges teach a denominational position instead of the whole counsel of God. Too many modernistic seminaries teach a diluted version of the true Gospel. They endeavour to explain away the miraculous and teach a

spurious version of the Gospel which will not offend the intellectual pride of man. The early church was unashamedly Bible based. It proclaimed the unadulterated Word of God. It practised the truths of the Bible. It was biblically oriented in all its proclamations and practices and if we are to emulate the growth which they experienced, we must take the same position.

8. THE END TIMES ARE HARVEST TIMES.

The Bible Prophets have always predicted the final triumph of the Kingdom of God. They have prophesied the Coming of Messiah to earth to establish His righteous rule over the nations. They have also clearly indicated that before this happens there will be a world wide harvest of unprecedented proportion. A time prior to the Second Coming when the Spirit will be poured out all over the earth and upon ALL flesh.

This tremendous "End Time Harvest," which will impact the whole world, will be accomplished through the means of Church Planting. God is presently preparing a great army of Church Planters across the earth who will preach the Gospel of the Kingdom and establish new local churches amongst all the ethnic groups of earth.

In Genesis 12:1-3. God promised Abram that "through his descendants He would bless every ethnic group on earth." The Church is a part of Abram's seed and the time for the fulfilment of this promise is almost upon us. We are privileged to be a small part of the end time harvesters who will reap the rewards. Here are a few of the scriptures which support this prospect :-

Rom. 4:13. Abraham is called, "*heir to the world.*"

Jer. 32:27. "*I am the Lord God of ALL flesh.*"

Psa. 24:1. "*The earth is the Lord's, and all those that dwell on it.*"

Joel. 2:28. Acts. 2:17. Spirit poured out on ALL flesh."

Isa. 66:16. "*Lord will plead with ALL flesh.*"

Isa. 40:5. "*ALL flesh shall see the glory of God.*"

Isa. 66:23. "*ALL flesh shall come and worship before Me.*"

Psa. 145:21. "*Let ALL flesh bless His Holy Name.*"

Psa. 2:8. *Heathen for His inheritance, uttermost earth for His possession.*"

Rev. 5:9. "*Out of EVERY kindred, tongue, people and nation.*"

Rev. 7:9. "*Innumerable company, every people, kindred and tongue.*"

Rev. 11:15. "*Kingdoms of this world become Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ.*"

9. JESUS IS COMING FOR A GLORIOUS CHURCH.

"That He might present her to Himself, a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5:27.)

The Church for which Christ returns will not be a carnal, fleshly, back-slidden travesty of the true Church. It will not be a modernistic, social emphasis, powerless Church with the marks of carnality upon it. Rather it will be a glorious Church, filled with life and power, experiencing growth and triumph to the four corners of the earth. It will be a Church moving in power and authority across the earth, proclaiming the Good News of God's Kingdom and establishing new groups of believers everywhere.

10. IT WILL EVEN WORK FOR YOU!

As we further investigate and discuss the glorious prospects of Church Growth in these exciting days, a thought may occur to you. Something within you may say, "these things may

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be true, and they may happen in many parts of the world, but I am sure that they will not happen here in the work in which I am involved." This is a tactic which Satan frequently tries to use, that it can happen to anyone but YOU. God is no respecter of persons. He is going to visit every nation despite any contrary indications. This great revival and harvest of the nations will happen all over the world and YOU can be a part of it.

Chapter Two

GROWTH FACTORS IN THE EARLY CHURCH

The three main factors in Church Growth were :-

1. **EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP.**
2. **EDIFICATION OF THE BODY.**
3. **EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH.**

Let us: a) Observe these in the early Church.
b) Relate them to the modern Church.

1. **EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP.**

a) **Appointed By God.**

There is a mistaken idea in many denominations that ministers *must be* seminary trained. Actually the evidence would indicate that the longer one is a student in seminary, the less likely he is to plant churches or pastor a dynamically increasing congregation. Theologians do not generally pioneer churches, nor do they usually see dynamic growth in their churches.

The important thing for truly effective leaders is that they are chosen and appointed by God. Such giftings should always be recognised, appreciated and joyfully accepted.

b) **Apostolic Giftings.**

The ministry gifts recognised in Apostolic times were Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers. Eph. 4:11.

c) **Anointed.**

Jesus commanded His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they became empowered by the Holy Ghost.

Luke 24:49 - "*Wait. until..*"

Acts 1:8 - "*You shall receive power..*"

Acts 2:4 - "*They were all filled with the Holy Ghost..*"

Acts 4:31 - "*They spoke the Word of God with boldness..*"

Acts 10:38 - "*God anointed Jesus .. with the Holy Spirit..*"

Acts 13:9 - "*Then Paul, .. filled with the Holy Spirit..*"

Eph. 5:18 - "*Be not drunk with wine. but be filled with the Spirit..*"

d) **United.**

The leadership of the early church was a team leadership which was united in heart, mind and spirit. They prayed together, fellowshiped together, and waited on God together, so that a deep spiritual unity developed amongst them. Thus when "*Peter stood with the eleven,*" (Acts. 2 :14) it was as though **they all spoke with one voice.** Ministry teams in the church today must value, appreciate, and strive for such unity.

Acts 2:1 - "*All with one accord, in one place..*"

Acts 2:42 - "*Continued steadfastly in .. KOINONIA..*"

Acts 2:44 - "*All who believed were 'together' and had all things common..*"

Acts 2:46 - "*.. continuing daily with one accord..*"

Acts 4:32 - "*the multitude..who believed..were of one heart and one soul..*"

Acts 4:24 - "*they raised their voice to God with one accord.. The unity of the ministry team..*"

Acts 2:14 - *"But Peter, standing up with the eleven.."*

e) They Were Prayerful.

The unity about which we have just spoken, carried over into the prayer life of the early church. It is this unity and harmony which makes congregational prayer so powerfully effective. Without it congregational prayer is insipid and powerless. It is when a congregation LIFTS UP ITS VOICE WITH ONE ACCORD that miraculous answers are received to those prayers.

Acts 1:14 - *"These all continued in prayer with one accord."*

Acts 2:42 - *"Continued steadfastly in prayer."*

Acts 4:24 - *"They raised their voice to God with one accord.."*

Acts 4:31 - *"And when they had prayed..the place was shaken."*

Acts 13:3 - *"And having fasted and prayed."*

Acts 14:23 - *.."appointed elders and prayed with fasting.."*

f) They Gave Powerful Proclamation.

Acts 2:14 - *"Peter raised his voice and said .."*

Biblical - Joel 2. Psalm 16:8-11; Psalm 68:18; 110:1.

g) They Exercised Boldness In Proclamation.

Some definitions of Boldness: **Bravely, Confidently, Assertively**

Adventurously, Authoritatively. - (Please consider the significance of each of these words in respect of ***your preaching***.)

Acts 4:13 - *"when they saw the boldness of Peter and John.."*

Acts 4:29 - *"that with all boldness they may speak your Word."*

Acts 4:31 - *"they spoke the Word of God with boldness."*

Acts 9:27 - *.."how he had preached boldly at Damascus.."*

Acts 9:29 - *"and he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord.."*

Acts 14:3 - *"they stayed there speaking boldly in the Lord."*

Acts 18:26 - *"Apollos began to speak boldly in the synagogue."*

Acts 19:8 - *"he. spoke boldly for three months."*

2 Cor. 7:4 - *"great is my boldness of speech before you.."*

Boldness And Authority In Preaching Come From :-

i) Preaching The Word Of God. Acts 4:29

ii) Speaking From Personal Experience:

Acts 4:20 - *"For we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard."*

h) They Were Filled With The Holy Ghost

Acts 4:8 - *"Peter, ..filled with the Holy Ghost, said to them"*

Being "filled with the Spirit", is a daily experience, an ongoing, continuous requirement. We must maintain the fullness of the Spirit. The tense of Eph. 5 :18. indicates, "Be constantly being filled with the Spirit."

i) They Experienced Power Encounters.

When the Power of God is clearly manifested.

When the Power of God confronts opposing forces.

When God's power directly confronts that of Satan and demons.

Acts 2:14-39 - This was a 'power encounter'. - power preaching!

Acts 2:43b - *"many signs and wonders were done by the Apostles."*

Acts 3:1-10 - Power ministry through Peter and John.

Acts 3:11-26 - In Solomon's porch.

Acts 5:1-11. - Ananias and Sapphira.

Acts 5:12-16 - Many signs and wonders done amongst the people. Acts 6:8 –
"Stephen, full of faith, did great wonders and signs.."

Acts 8:5,6 - *"Philip. preached Christ to them. and the multitudes. bearing and seeing the miracles which he did."*

Acts 9:36 - Peter and Dorcas

Acts 9:42 - Many believed on the Lord.

Acts 10:34 - House of Cornelius vs. 44-48 - *"while he yet spoke"*

Acts 11:21 - *"and the hand of the Lord was with them."*

Acts 13:8-12 - Paul and Elymas

Acts 14:9 - Paul at Lystra *"stand up straight on your feet."*

Acts 16:16-19 - Paul delivers the servant girl.

Acts 16:25-34 - In the Philippian jail.

Acts 19:11 - *"and the Lord worked mighty miracles by the hand of Paul."*

Acts 19:14-16 - Sons of Scena (warning).

Acts 26:13-44; 21-26 - Paul's Word of Knowledge.

Acts 28:3-5 - Paul and the viper (Mark 16).

2. EDIFICATION OF THE BODY.

a) The Emphasis of Peter's Message and Instructions.

The powerful effect of Peter's message upon the crowd, and his clear emphasis on THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST, laid the foundation for the all that followed. It clarified the requirements of the Gospel and prepared the new believers for the indoctrination and establishing which followed.

Acts 2:37 - *"When they heard this, they were cut to the heart."* (The Word cut through their mind, objections, pre-conceived notions, to the heart.)

Acts 2:37 - *"they cried out to Peter, "what shall we do?"*

Peter's Explicit Command -Acts 2:38,39:

i) **Repent.** - Turn from your old life.

ii) **Be Baptised.** Bury the old life.

iii) **Receive The Holy Spirit.** Receive the new life.

Acts 2:40 - *"Save yourselves from this untoward generation."*

Our "salvation from sin, its power and its penalty," is accomplished when we repent and receive Christ. Our salvation "from this untoward (perverse, rebellious, mutinous) generation," transpires through obedience and practice of the kind of teaching and indoctrination which the Apostles gave them.

Acts 2:41 - *"but those who gladly received the Word were baptised."*

Acts 2:42 - *"they continued steadfastly in the faith."*

Acts. 2 : 42. tells us that they continued steadfastly in four things :-

a.1) Apostles Doctrine.

"Doctrine," in this context, had little to do with systematic theology or the systematising of their religious beliefs. It had to do with the practical issues of living their new lives effectively to the Glory of God. The Apostle's doctrine was the manner of life which they had learned and imbibed from living in close

proximity to Jesus for some three years. He had indoctrinated them with the Kingdom style of living. He had taught them by precept, example, and practice, the life style that befitted the Kingdom of God. Now they were passing on this new life style to the new believers.

In the context of the New Testament "doctrine" is almost inevitably linked with the practicalities of right behaviour and good relationships within the Body of Christ. After exhorting Timothy to "*Give heed to his doctrine*" - 1 Tim. 4 :16. Paul proceeds to remind him of how the various members of the Body should relate to each other. 1 Tim. 5 :1-16. Likewise in Titus. 2: 1-10.

a.2) Koinonia

The Greek word for "Fellowship" is "Koinonia" which has a much deeper meaning than is generally understood in the Church today. It was used of strong partnerships and solemn relationships. In the New Testament setting it obviously refers to the NEW COVENANT RELATIONSHIP in which we are now related to God through Christ, and by which we are related to one another in the deep bonds of covenant relationship.

a.3) Breaking of Bread

"Breaking bread from house to house," infers much more than sharing the communion meal together. It also has connotations of covenant relationship and also of the genuine hospitality which was lovingly shared by the partners of the New Covenant Koinonia.

a.4) Prayers

The fact that "prayers" comes after the previous three factors is not by chance. The quality of the united prayers which came from this company are only possible when the company is strongly and inseparably united as they were. The quality of their mutual commitment, plus the other features of their new redeemed life style, had a profound and powerful effect on their intercession.

b) Foundational teaching

Acts 2:40 - *"With many other words he testified and exhorted them."* Their learning was not in a class room context, academic and isolated from the realities of life. Nor was it theological in the modern concept of the word. It was scriptural, spiritual, and practical. e.g. Acts 1:1 - *"All that Jesus began to do and teach."*

c) Mentoring

"The influence of a mature and trusted advisor upon a younger apprentice."
This teaching style of the Apostles was *"be followers of me, even as I am a follower of Christ."* 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:7,9.

d) Comradeship.

Acts 4:23 - *"being let go they went to their own companions."*
Acts 4:32 - *"multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and one soul."*
Acts 4:33 - *"And with great power the Apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on them all."*

The fellowship of believers within a church should never be allowed to degenerate to a "club style," of membership which is formal and structured. The members need to be friends and companions, with a spiritual sense of comradeship and brotherhood which is living and enduring.

e) **They Had All Things Common. - Acts 4:32b**

It was this style of relationship to which I have just referred which enabled them to gladly share their lives and goods together. There was a deep sense of loving concern which caused them to live for each other, sharing their victories, burdens, and experiences, in a spirit of mutual brotherhood.

f) **Their Generous and Sacrificial Giving. - Acts 4:34-37**

From the very commencement of the early church the members accepted responsibility for the financial support of their various activities and thus became self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating, all of which is necessary for a truly New Testament pattern church. In some countries there is a tendency to look overseas for financial support for Church Planting and Church Growth. This is a mistake. It may be more difficult, and it will certainly be more challenging, to undertake one's own financial support, but in the long run it is much better and the church becomes much stronger.

Someone has made the observation, and I believe it to be largely true, that any church, or organisation which is commenced with imported finances will be in danger of dying for the lack of them.

g) **They Rejoiced in Suffering Shame. Acts. 5 :41.**

The early church encountered much opposition, discrimination and persecution, but instead of discouraging or hindering its growth, the winds of persecution served only to fan the flames of revival. I have personally frequently observed that "the stronger the opposition, the stronger the converts and the church."

At times when I have felt that it is so difficult and hard for the people who make commitment to Christ that it will probably discourage anyone from making a commitment, the reverse has been true. People have still come to Christ and the strength and quality of their commitment has been all the more remarkable.

h) **Adequate Administration - Organisation. Acts 6:1-7.**

OVERCOMING GROWING PAINS. Anyone who has been personally involved in Church Growth knows that growth usually progresses in phases. After a period of exciting upward growth we frequently reach a plateau. This temporary pause is often caused by some problem which when dealt with will lead on to even greater growth. This was clearly the case in Acts 6 : 1-7. The solution lay in the appointment of more workers and the introduction of DELEGATION. (to entrust and commit a task to another, and to confer such authority to them as is necessary to fully accomplish the task.)

THE PROBLEM.

a) **Multiplication** frequently brings its own problems, often referred to as "growing pains." However, the solving of such problems usually leads to even greater growth.

b) **Murmuring** caused dissension and disunity amongst the believers.

c) **Inadequate Organisation.** The organisational procedures did not keep pace with the rapid growth which was occurring. This incident introduces the realisation that good and proper organisation and administration is essential to Church Growth. This is a reality with which many churches have had to come to terms in the past few years. Prior to this, good organisational procedures were seldom seen in church circles. But

with the recent dramatic growth rates in many churches this aspect has been seen to be crucial.

- d) **Racial Disharmony.** Inadequate organisation caused some racial discrimination and tension furthering the disunity and creating unwanted tensions. The problems we face may take many different guises but most of them can be overcome with improved organisational procedures.

THE SOLUTION.

- a) **Establish Right Priorities.** What to delegate - what not to delegate.
The Apostles determined that it was not appropriate for them to neglect their spiritual tasks of "the Word of God, prayer and the ministry of the Word." Vs.2,4. in order to supervise the more practical tasks of feeding the widows etc. Therefore it was determined that suitable persons be recruited to whom these tasks would be delegated.
- b) **Delegation.** The process of delegation is a thoroughly biblical one often referred to as "The Jethro Principle." - **Ex. 18:13-27.** Please note the basic principles.
- i) Select suitable people. v.21.
God fearing Men.
Men of truth.
Hating covetousness.
 - ii) Teach them their tasks. v 20.
 - iii) Appoint them to their ministries. v 21b
 - iv) Give them adequate authority. v 22. *"Let them bear the burden with you."*
 - v) It will be easier for the leader. - v 22b.
 - vi) It will be better for the people.. Ex. 18:18

The Apostles also Adopted these Principles:-

- a) **Choosing the Right People. Verse 3.**
- i) Good reputation.
 - ii) Full of the Holy Ghost.
 - iii) Full of wisdom.
 - iv) Full of faith. - Verse 5 - Stephen.
- b) **Delegating the Right Tasks.**
- i) Define the task.
 - ii) Communicate it clearly, - preferably in writing.
 - iii) Pray over them (verse 6b)
 - iv) Commission them - authority. (responsibility before authority).
 - v) Give them proper recognition.
- c) **Discipling the "Apprentices."**
- Through a process of :-
- i) Instruction.
 - ii) Demonstration.
 - iii) Involvement.
 - iv) Evaluation.
- d) **The Pleasing Results. Acts 6:7.**
- i) The Word of God spread.
 - ii) The number of "disciples" increased greatly.
 - iii) A great many priests became "obedient to the Faith"

(Possibly the reason why "a great many priests became obedient to the Faith," was because the Apostles now had more time to 'wait on their ministries', and improve their preaching and teaching effectiveness.)

- iv) Deacons like Stephen and Philip graduated to Apostolic ministry.

3. EVANGELISTIC ACTIVITIES.

a) **Conspicuous Public Proclamation.**

Acts 26:26 - "*This thing, (Christ's death and resurrection) was not done in a corner.*"

Public proclamation was a powerful feature of early Church Growth. The Apostles took their message to the places of public gathering and fearlessly proclaimed the Gospel. Unfortunately the modern church has largely retreated into its ivory towers, and the most profound and powerful proclamation is made before a captive, already convinced and committed audience. If the public are coming into a church in convincing numbers then evangelism within the church may be justified, but if this is not the case then the church must find ways and means of going public and proclaiming their message to the people who really need to hear it. Please read the following incidents and note the public exposure :-

Acts 2: 14 -39. Peter's great Pentecostal message.

Acts 3:1-10 - Peter and John at the Temple.

Acts 3:11-26 - The multitudes in Solomon's Porch.

Acts 8:4-25 - Philip in Samaria.

b) **Missionary Enterprise.**

Following the scattering of the Church, (Acts. 8 : 1-4) they finally got the message that God wanted them to reach out from Jerusalem into Judea, Samaria, and from there to the uttermost parts of the earth. (Acts. 1 :8) The Church soon became a powerful missionary sending church. viz.

Acts 13:1-3

Acts 13:4 - Cyprus.

Acts 13 - Antioch

Acts 14:1 - Iconium etc.

c) **Power Encounters.**

Power encounters remained an integral and vital tool for evangelism. Wherever the Apostles and disciples preached the Word of God, signs and wonders followed as Jesus had promised. Mark. 16 : 15-20.

Paul declared that he had "*fully preached the Gospel of Christ from Jerusalem to Illyricum, with mighty signs and wonders by the Spirit of God.*" - Rom.15:9. Such evidences are still current today and wherever the Gospel is confirmed in this manner the greatest progress and growth is to be seen.

d) **Lay Ministers' Activities (Harnessing the Body).**

The early church revival was one in which "laymen" played a significant role. On the scattering of the Church, (Acts. 8 :1-4.) the Apostles were the only ones who remained in Jerusalem. The rest of the church was "scattered abroad" through persecution and it was these "refugees" who spread the Gospel wherever they went. Their ministry was not one of formal preaching but one in which they talked (laleo) about Jesus wherever they went.

I am personally convinced that the great revival and harvest of the Last Days is also one in which non-ordained ministers will feature strongly. (I refer to ordination in the technical sense in which the ordinee is seen to be a seminary trained graduate with an academic degree.)

Probably the greatest harvest presently taking place is in the People's Republic of China and is a classic example of this. Amongst the many thousands of effective leaders, a very small percentage have had any seminary training and an even smaller number are officially ordained by any denomination.

e) Holy Ghost Boldness.

In the face of discrimination, threats and persecution, the early church certainly needed extraordinary boldness to fulfill their task. The incident in Acts 4 :18 -31. is a fine illustration of their tenuous position and their bold response to the threats of the authorities.

Acts 4:18 - Threatened. Forbidden to preach Jesus.

Acts 4:29 - Prayed for boldness.

Acts 4:31 - *"And they spoke the Word of God with boldness."*

Such boldness is still a prime requirement for those who will effectively proclaim the Gospel. Even without such discrimination and threats, it still requires great courage and boldness to proclaim the Gospel fearlessly and effectively. This kind of proclamation is essential to the dynamic growth of the Church.

f) They Had "Been With Jesus" (Acts 4:13)

It was very evident, even to the unconverted community, that the disciples had spent quality time with Jesus. The effects of the intimate communion which the disciples enjoyed with Christ, was evident to all.

g) Daily Activity.

"Daily in the Temple and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that Jesus was the Messiah." (Acts 5:42) The church's witness and proclamation became a feature of their every day lives.

Chapter Three

CHURCH GROWTH FOR SMALL CHURCHES

One of the main reasons for writing this manual is to encourage and assist those of you who shepherd small churches to believe and work to see your church experience healthy growth. I am particularly keen to help those who have recently planted a new congregation. The congregations may be small. You probably do not own a "church" building. You may have limited access to personnel, finances, and facilities, **but YOUR CHURCH CAN STILL GROW.**

SEE YOUR CHURCH AS JESUS SAW IT.

In Matt. 18 : 20. I believe we have an exquisite brief definition of a church in its simplest form. Jesus, speaking in the context of a serious discussion on church function, says "*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.*"

So a church, in its simplest form is :-

- a) A minimum of 2, or 3 people.
- b) Gathered together in the Name (authority) of Jesus.
- c) With Jesus "in the midst of them."

There is no mention of :-

- a) A church building.
- b) Any specified liturgy or order of service.
- c) Ordained clergy or seminary graduates.
- d) Constitution.

It is interesting to note that in the four gospels, which record the earthly ministry of Jesus, there are only three mentions of the word "church" and there are 80 references to kingdom.

But those three references teach us some important lessons as to how Jesus "perceived" the church.

1. Matt. 16 : 16-18.

"Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my **church**, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

And I will give to you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in *heaven*, and whatever you loose on earth, will have been loosed in heaven."

Notice:

- It is Jesus who builds the church.
- The foundation, the revelation and confession of who Christ is.
- Only God can give that revelation.
- God gives the "keys" of His Kingdom to men of apostolic gift.

- Commissioned to open what has been opened in heaven.
- They can close (bind) what God has already bound in heaven.

2. Matt. 18 : 15-20.

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church, but if he refuses even to hear the **church**, let him be to you like a heathen or a tax collector.

Assuredly I say to you that whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven. and whatsoever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

Again I say to you that if two or three of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.

For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, I am there in the midst of them."

Notice:

- The church is a brotherhood (Koinonia) of believers.
- God wants the brothers to actively pursue unity and harmony.
- The church is an assembly or gathering of people.
- Whatever they ask in agreement, will be granted by God.
- Wherever even two or three gather together in Christ's Name, He will be amongst them.

THINK "FELLOWSHIP," RATHER THAN "CHURCH."

The word church has collected a lot of connotations over the years which are non-biblical. Therefore if we think in terms of "church," our mind tends to focus on an extra-biblical image.

One of the words most frequently employed to describe the structure and nature of a church, is *Fellowship*. The Greek word translated thus is "*Koinonia*," and is probably the best way to describe what a church is meant to be.

Koinonia, or Fellowship, is used to describe the deepest, richest, strongest, most intimate, and binding type of partnership that exists. It is used in this manner to describe

- a) Our relationship with God.
- b) Our relationship with one another in the Body of Christ.

In the view of Jesus, each local church was a Koinonia. A living, vibrant, dynamic, committed partnership of believers. Their commitment being firstly to God, and secondly to each other.

The basic meaning of Koinonia is "partnership." The partnership of marriage, as exemplified in the Bible, is perhaps an ideal model of this. The members are equal partners in the relationship. They participate fully in its activities, sharing equally in its responsibilities and privileges.

Some of the words which illustrate the nature of this relationship are sharer, participator, associate, companion, partaker.

I believe that the most attractively compelling feature of the early church was the nature of this relationship. It was one which touched every facet of the lives of those who became participants. It was both challenging and fulfilling. An attractive element which drew multitudes into its orbit. I further believe that this kind of relationship still has enormous attraction today and that any church fellowship that features this quality of relationship will experience dynamic purpose and growth.

THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

In Luke 9 : 1-6. & Luke. 10 : 1-12. we see the commissioning by Jesus of the first evangelists who were ever sent out. There are numerous interesting points here, one of which is that they were to use private homes for their accommodation and as the base for their activities. This evidently began a long tradition of using private houses as evangelistic bases and also places in which to conduct the activities of the new congregations which came into being.

Much of the activity of the early church took place in the homes of new believers. So in the view of Jesus and of the Apostles, a church which was conducted in a house was a perfectly legitimate church and did not need a consecrated building or formal liturgy to validate it. (The early church evidently did not possess consecrated buildings for at least three centuries.)

So if your church consists of just a few believers and you meet in a house, do not be ashamed or embarrassed, you are consistent with the early church model and many great churches began in this manner.

IMPORTANT FACTORS IN SMALL CHURCH EFFECTIVENESS.

1. Be A Shepherd To The Flock.

The analogy of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and believers as His flock is a good one. Pastors are to be faithful under-shepherds, caring for the flock in Christ's behalf.

Psalm 23 is interesting in this respect. According to Jewish tradition this psalm represents a day and a night in the life of a sheep. The sheep is recounting its blessing in having so wonderful a shepherd as the Lord.

Notice some of those things for which the sheep is grateful :-

The Lord is a SHEPHERD.

He gives the sheep assurance of adequate provision. (PROVIDER.)

He is a LEADER, going before the sheep and leading in the right direction.

He makes me to lie down. (SECURITY)

He provides green pastures -tender shoots, for food. (FEEDER.)

His ministry is refreshing and restorative. (RESTORER.)

He sets an example of righteousness for the sheep to follow. (EXAMPLE) Through the valley of the shadow, the Shepherd's rod and staff are a constant source of encouragement. (COMFORT)

He provides a safe sheep-fold, where wolves and hyenas are unable to enter. (PROTECTION)

He anoints the head. (ANOINTING)

He inspires optimism of life-long goodness and mercy. (OPTIMIST)

This sheep will be a life long subject in the house of its shepherd. (INSPIRES HOPE FOR FUTURE)

2. **Develop Your Ministry.** "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." Col. 4 :17.

"Give attention to reading, to exhortation, teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy, with the laying on of hands by the eldership. Meditate on these things, give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those that hear you." 1 Tim. 3 :13 -16.

God can never grow a church bigger than its leadership. As you allow Him to develop you in your spiritual life and ministry, the church will grow with you, benefiting from the growing maturity of your life and ministry.

The early Apostles gave a high priority to the development of their ministries.

(Acts. 6 : 4.) concentrating on prayer, the study of God's Word, and the ministry of that Word.

3. **Practice The Basic Principles.**

The three basic principles of growth irrespective of the size of that church are :-

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP.

EDIFYING THE BODY.

EVANGELISTIC ACTIVITIES.

(We discuss these principles at some length in Chapter. 2. Please study them carefully and practice them faithfully, they are as essential and as effective in a small church as in a much larger one.

4. **Don't Break The "Oikos" Ties.**

One of the many benefits of a small new congregation is that generally the majority of the people are new converts. There are many advantages in this, namely that :-

- New believers are still in the warm passion of their first love.
- They are enthusiastic and enterprising.
- They find it easier to share their testimony with others.
- They still have many contacts amongst their non-Christian friends.

It is important that you encourage them to maintain contact with such friends for they are a prospective mission field. The Bible calls such family members and personal friends one's "oikos." Witnessing to them and winning them to Christ is an especially fruitful means of evangelism.

5. **Special Features of a Small Church.**

There are some aspects of Church Growth strategy which seem easier for large churches to engage in, but here are some features in which any congregation, no matter how small may engage.

A STRONG EMPHASIS ON PRAYER. Prayer was the birthing environment of the early church and is an indispensable feature of church growth today. Prayer for revival,

healthy development, and dynamic growth must be encouraged at all levels, corporately, in all kinds of groups, and individually. Prayer is essential at every stage of growth. It will help birth, sustain and increase healthy growth.

HOLY SPIRIT ATMOSPHERE. Two things are essential for a genuine Holy Spirit atmosphere and environment.

Firstly, the unhindered presence of the Holy Spirit.

Secondly the free participation of Spirit-filled people.

The fruit and gifts of the Spirit need to be manifestly evident in a spontaneous yet orderly manner. Nothing is more attractive or exciting than the liberating presence of the Holy Spirit. His presence makes the difference.

WARM PERSONALISED FELLOWSHIP. There are some very special benefits available in the gatherings of smaller congregations and one of them is the warm, informal, friendly and caring atmosphere which frequently characterises such churches. People are able to get to know each other on a personal basis. The friendships and relationships formed are personalised and fulfilling.

PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS. In the smaller congregation, the full time staff is usually very small and all kinds of voluntary assistance is urgently needed and greatly appreciated. Everyone is valued and needed. This kind of situation makes it feasible for members of the congregation to function in their priestly capacity. Shepherding, nurturing and discipling can be undertaken in a very natural fashion in this type of setting.

EXCITING PRAISE AND WORSHIP. Large numbers can tend to formalise the worship environment of a big church, but smaller ones frequently maintain an informality that is conducive to a joyful spirit of freedom in worship.

A spirit of joyful spontaneity, freedom, and joyful exuberance often characterises a smaller church, in contrast to the restrained formality of larger churches. People often feel much freer to participate and enter into joyful worship in this less formal kind of environment.

RELEVANT AND PRACTICAL PREACHING. The same principles in respect of freedom and informality, hold true for preaching too. The pulpit of a large church often seems to paralyse the preacher and induce a formal style of preaching. The preaching aspect of a service is undoubtedly a highlight and an extremely influential feature.

I believe that people today are wanting to hear simple, relevant, and practical messages. The day for a formal, theological, treatise is gone. People want to know how to cope with the practical issues and problems of life. They want to hear something that will help them go into another workaday week with hope and inspiration.

SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES. Smaller groups lend themselves admirably to the enjoyment of fellowship and this should be experienced in a social dimension of relaxation as well as the more spiritual areas of activity.

Don't neglect opportunities to enjoy life together. Make opportunities to relax and enjoy diversions together. Organise some outings, picnics, fellowship meals together. The members are able to get to know each other much better during these occasions.

6. What About A Building?

Obviously there are some real advantages in owning a building suitable and congenial for church activities. However, one of the mistakes which some small congregations frequently make is to over-estimate the advantages, and try to erect or purchase a building too soon. In today's world, land and buildings are very expensive items, and once a fellowship gets involved in obtaining them they frequently have no finances for anything else.

There are obviously things which are more important than a building and these should be established first. The main priority is the forming of a strong ministry team and the support base that this will require. Always try to form your ministry team with a prophetic eye to the future. Get a team capable of carrying you far beyond the immediate growth levels of the church. For instance, if you have 50 people in your congregation, endeavour to form a team capable of taking you to, and beyond the 250 mark. This kind of planning shows evidence of objective management rather than crisis management.

Also a young church should be coached into becoming a mission church, on both the home and overseas fronts, before it ties up all its available finances in real estate.

There are usually many types of buildings and facilities which churches can lease or rent until their congregations grows to a point where purchase seems much more feasible. School halls and facilities are the most obvious and frequently the most suitable. Many churches are also leasing ware-houses and finding this cost effective and manageable.

My counsel, to a young, growing congregation would be to avoid purchasing or building until the fellowship has grown to the size and financial income where it can afford to do so without severely straining the budget. Obtaining a suitable property will always be a big demand on the budget but try to avoid it being so severe that it will restrict all other activities.

7. The Transition To A Bigger Church.

As you concentrate prayerfully on "growing your small church," remember that most big churches started off like yours is today. It is a most rewarding and fulfilling experience to break through the growth barriers and be part of what once was a small and perhaps insignificant church, becoming a much larger, stronger, more influential and growing church. The ministry of Church Planting and Church Growth is a challenging one which demands dedication, commitment and hard work. But nothing can be more rewarding than the joy of seeing people brought into God's Kingdom and growing up into Him in all things.

Chapter Four

YOUR CHURCH CAN GROW

Over the past twenty years, the "CHURCH GROWTH CONCEPT," has exploded upon the Christian world. All over the earth there are evidences that this is far more than a humanly contrived strategy. It is obviously part of a Divine, prophetic purpose. It is an indicator that the universal, end time harvest predicted by the major and minor prophets, is arriving in this our day.

This tremendous phenomena is most dramatically obvious in the developing nations of our world. Whilst the materialistic Western world is largely devoid of true spiritual revival, many of the nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America are experiencing dynamic, sweeping revival which is birthing millions of converts and thousands of new congregations. In many nations thousands of new congregations come into being every year and many of the established congregations are dramatically increasing in size.

The most remarkable example of this is the Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea, which now has upwards of 800,000 members. But there are thousands of other, less spectacular yet impressive examples of churches increasing rapidly in membership and influence. I firmly believe that in the next few decades Church Planting and Church Growth throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America will accelerate enormously. I further believe that the churches in these areas will launch great missionary endeavours into the Western world nations which will precipitate a world wide spiritual harvest of unprecedented proportions.

THE CHURCH GROWTH PHENOMENA IS HERE TO STAY.

- **Because Almighty God is the author of it.**
- **Because it is now the prophetic time for it.**
- **Because as the number of churches around the world increases they will sponsor more Church Planting and more Church Growth everywhere.**
- **Because the Bible predicts a world wide harvest to herald the return of Christ to reign.**

As we commence our study of Church Growth, let us ask ourselves again this basic question, what is a CHURCH?

We have already noted, in our study of Church Planting that :-

- a) A Church is NOT a building.
- b) It is NOT a religious Institution.
- c) It is NOT a denomination.
- d) It is NOT a religious activities centre.

A Church is not comprised of bricks and mortar, nor timber and iron. It is comprised of **PEOPLE. The Church is :-**

A "CALLED OUT" PEOPLE. (Ecclesia = Called out.)

"Who has called you out of darkness. "

(Col. 1:13.)

A CALLED "INTO" PEOPLE.

"into the Kingdom of the Son of His love." (Col. 1 :13)

"Who are called according to (into) His purposes." (Rom. 12:28.)

In Church Planting, and Church Growth, our primary purpose is to :-

- a) Call people out of their darkness.
- b) Into God's glorious Kingdom of light.

THE CHURCH IS :-

A redeemed people. Lk. 1:68. Gal. 3:13. 1 Pet. 1:18. Rev. 5:9.

A redemptive people. Matt. 5: 13-16. -salt and light to the world.

An active, Spirit empowered people. Acts 8:4.

A people destined to evangelise the world. Acts 1:8b. Psa.2:8.

OUR CALLING IS :-

- a) **A HEAVENLY CALLING.** Heb. 3:1. "partakers of the Heavenly calling."
- b) **A HIGH CALLING.** Phil. 3:14. "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."
- c) **A HOLY CALLING.** 2 Tim. 1:9. "has called us with a holy calling."
- d) **WE ARE CALLED INTO FELLOWSHIP.** (Koinonia)
With Christ and His people. (1 Jn.1:3.)
- e) **WE ARE CALLED TO DISCIPLESHIP.** Matt. 28:19, 20.
- f) **WE ARE CALLED TO BE WITNESSES.** (Acts. 1:8.)
- g) **WE ARE CALLED TO BE MINISTERS.** (Gal. 1:5.)

SOME PRE-REQUISITES FOR CHURCH GROWTH.

- a) **VISION.** " Without a clear vision, the project flounders. "
- b) **DESIRE.**

The church must WANT to grow.

You may say, "Doesn't every church want to grow?"

Sadly the answer is NO! -Some have a different priority!

Some have a REMNANT MENTALITY. Believing that the end time church will become a tiny remnant in a Godless world. They tend to believe that if a church is growing rapidly, it must be compromising some spiritual truth or quality. Some have an idea that we cannot have QUANTITY AND QUALITY, and they opt for what they believe is quality, claiming that smaller is always better quality.

Many churches have never been properly faced with the challenge of Church Growth.

Many churches do not know how to proceed towards Church Growth.

Some have tried to see their church grow and feel it has not worked.

Unfortunately, many churches are just not willing to pay the price required.

Some are unwilling to move out of their comfort zone.

MANY CHURCHES ARE FEARFUL TO ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE.

Afraid of failure and the possibility that "it may not work."

Afraid to accept the responsibilities of growth :-

- The extra work load created.
- The additional finances required.
- Responsibility for enlarging their premises.
- The pastoral leadership must embrace the vision.
- They must impart it to the people.
- They must provide adequate training.
- They must lead by example.
- They must challenge and motivate the believers.

- They must continually exhort and inspire them.
- They must prayerfully maintain the momentum.

c) **DIRECTION.**

"When you do not know where you are going, any road will get you there."

Every church needs a **VISION**, and **GOALS** i.e.
To know **where** you are going, and **how** you will get there.

THE VISION MUST BE RECEIVED FROM GOD.

It is not wise to wistfully imagine or fantasise, using your imagination to create a mental picture of what your church might grow into.

You must pray fervently about it.

You must empty your mind of pre-conceived ideas.

You must learn to "tune in" to God's Spirit.

You must share the vision with trusted fellow workers.

You should seek for the "unity of the Spirit" as a confirmation.

Pray positively about it -bring it into focus.

Let the vision live within your spirit.

Commit it to writing with all specific details.

Talk positively about it, to yourself and your team members.

The VISION is spiritual. The GOALS are practical.

Clarify the vision, make sure it is :-

- **INSPIRED.**
- **SPECIFIC.**
- **MEASURABLE.**
- **REALISTIC.**
- **ACHIEVABLE.**

d) **OUTLINING YOUR GOALS.** (How you will attain your vision.)

• **How?**

How will we realistically achieve this growth?

God does not have only one growth program, it may differ from one church to another. Find His purpose for YOUR situation.

• **When?**

When are we to commence this emphasis?

Establishing a time frame. Short and long term goals.

• **With Whom?**

Personnel. Who will be part of this program?

Who will lead the various phases?

• **What?**

What equipment will be needed?

What expenses will be incurred? Budget requirements?

• **Determination.**

Church Growth is not a simple, undemanding task.

There will probably be obstacles, discouragements, hindrances.

You will undoubtedly need determination to carry you through.

- **Review and Adjustment.**
The program must be subject to consistent, periodic review with necessary adjustments and corrections for "fine tuning."

Chapter Five

THE MINISTRY OF EVANGELISM

"Do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry." (2 Tim.4:5)

These words, spoken by Paul to Timothy, are also applicable to every minister and every church. Unless each local church does the work of evangelism, it is not using its ministry potential properly nor fully.

Every Pastor and congregation should honestly and prayerfully assess their situation to see if they are fulfilling this injunction or whether they are failing God, themselves, and their community in this important matter.

EMPHASISING EVANGELISM.

Evangelism is the sharing, proclaiming, and declaring of good news, particularly the good news of Christ's salvation.

Evangelism is "reaping the harvest" for Christ and His Kingdom, and Church Growth cannot happen without it. It is the "bottom line" of Church Growth.

Some growth may occur in a church through biological increase, —(children born to your members) or transfer membership, —(Christians transferring their membership to your congregation) but genuine Church Growth cannot occur without real evangelism taking place. Only the conversion and conserving of new believers will make it happen, so you must :-

EMPHASISE EVANGELISM.

Witnessing to people and winning them to Christ is the one aspect of our ministry that we can only perform on this side of eternity. Once we reach God's presence we can praise and worship Him throughout eternity but we will not be able to win people to Him then. So if we are going to do it, we must DO IT NOW.

WHAT IS EVANGELISM?

The root meaning of the word is to share, proclaim, preach, announce, and declare the Good News of Christ's salvation.

WHY SHOULD WE EMPHASISE EVANGELISM?

Because God's salvation, procured through Christ's death and resurrection, is the underlying theme of the whole Bible. The thin red line of redemption runs through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Evangelism, the spreading of this Good News, is therefore the most important task that any human may undertake.

Evangelism is the very heartbeat of God.

It was the sole reason for Christ's coming to this earth.

He came to purchase our redemption through His death and resurrection.

He came to *"seek and to save that which was lost."* (Luke. 19 :10)

He came to find and rescue the sheep which was lost. (Luke. 15 :4)

We should emphasise evangelism because :-

The Bible emphasises it.

Jesus emphasises it.

Every church which is growing and winning people to Christ emphasises it.

We need to make our church members evangelism conscious.

By preaching on evangelism.

By teaching on evangelism.

By demonstrating evangelism.

By training the people in evangelism.

EVANGELISM -INSIDE AND OUT.

Evangelism must occur both inside and outside our church.

1. INSIDE THE CHURCH WALLS.

EVANGELISTIC SERVICES.

Many churches have replaced their evangelistic service with celebrations, or praise and worship services and have retreated from the cutting edge of evangelism. They have opted for "deeper" type of meetings rather than a fervent evangelistic meeting. Many reasons, (excuses?) have been given for this kind of move, but I feel that the real reason is usually that non-Christians are not present in those churches in sufficient numbers to warrant a weekly evangelistic meeting. Pastors have realised that there is no point in preaching the simple gospel to the saints every week and that it might be better to use that time to feed the saints.

The real solution would be for the members to become so active in witnessing that they would be bringing unbelievers into the church every week, thus filling the pool with fish. Pastor, why not think about using the Sunday evening service to train, or re-train your people in witnessing and evangelism? Then motivate them to actively bring people to Christ and to church. Turn your Sunday night meeting back into a powerful Gospel meeting and believe to see God save many souls.

"USER FRIENDLY" EVANGELISTIC MEETINGS.

"User friendly" is a phrase which arrived with the computer age to describe computers and programs which are easy to use and easy to get along with. It could also be a good way to describe effective evangelistic meetings, make them also "user friendly," appealing to non-believers and pre-Christians.

User friendly meetings must have a warm atmosphere, and be joyful and positive. Newcomers should feel immediately welcome and this feeling should increase as the meeting proceeds. Some of the features which help to create such a meeting are :-

Happy, joyful, lively music.

A dynamic, Holy Ghost atmosphere where people sense the presence of God.

Relevant, easy to understand preaching.

Powerful altar calls where people are urged to commit themselves to Christ.

Friendly, helpful counsellors to pray with them

A sound "follow up system" to establish new believers in their Faith.

SEEKER SERVICES.

Some churches, the best known being Willow Creek Community Church, near Chicago, under Pastor Bill Hybels, have recently specialised in "Seeker Services." These are meetings specifically tailored for non-believers. They are deliberately non-religious in character. They

are not worship services, and the people are seen as an audience, rather than a congregation. The meetings feature a great deal of drama presentation when the Gospel is dramatically presented in various formats. This kind of presentation is not easy to do in any church which is not already large and has the right kind of facilities.

However, the idea of "seeker oriented services" is one which every church might seriously consider. Beginning with serious consideration of "How user friendly are our services?" And, "how can we make our meetings more attractive to non-believers without compromising spiritual standards?"

SOUL WINNERS SEMINARS.

One obvious way to make the people soul winning conscious is to conduct some seminars, work shops, and training programs on the subject. Advertise them well. Urge the people to attend. Make it as easy as possible for them to come. Aim to get whole families involved in the program.

Why not take them through the manual, "**You can be a real Winner.**" ? This could also be a prelude to conducting a Church Planters Training Program in your church.

Train the people in altar work and counselling.

Train them in the art of personal witness.

Set an example for them by being a faithful witness and bringing others to Christ.

Remember that the shepherd not only cares for the ninety and nine. Having ensured their safety, He goes out into the night to seek for the one sheep which is lost. (Luke. 15 :4)

2. OUTSIDE THE CHURCH BUILDING.

EVANGELISM THROUGH THE CELL GROUPS.

We have already strongly advocated the formation of cell groups within the local church. These dynamic small groups provide an excellent environment for nurturing and discipling new believers. However, they also provide an excellent base for evangelism too.

Many people will come to a house meeting who would not enter a church.

The cell group is usually much closer to them than is the church.

The atmosphere is less religious than that of a church.

The numbers are smaller -less threatening.

The atmosphere is more informal.

Enjoyable evenings, meals, parties, videos, can be enjoyed.

Instead of using the cell group simply as a pastoral, or caring medium, insist on it being an evangelistic outreach. Keep the emphasis on reaching and winning people. Encourage the members to keep this uppermost in their minds.

COMMUNITY SERVICES.

Many communities have public services where needy and lonely people are often to be found. I refer to hospitals, aged person's homes, orphanages, prisons, handicapped persons homes or schools, etc. Most of these places are usually needing volunteer workers in some capacity and provide a wonderful opportunity for Christians to serve their less fortunate brethren. Friendship evangelism can often be accomplished in these situations but it needs to be done with tact and discretion. Some over-zealous Christians can become more of a problem than a blessing. But look at your community and prayerfully consider which aspects of it may hold potential as a mission field for evangelism. There are also services like 'meals on wheels' and other community service programs in which some Christians may assist and at the same time find opportunity for wise and tactful ways to spread the Good News.

EVERY CHURCH A SOUL WINNING CENTRE.

There is really no biblical reason why every church, no matter how small or large, should not be a Soul Winning Centre. The responsibility for this lies largely with the pastor and his team. A local church usually follows the lead and example of the pastor. His responsibility before God is to provide the lead and direction for that church.

1. MAKE A THOROUGH AND HONEST APPRAISAL.

"Where are we, and where do we go from here?"

Before we can begin to make positive and productive changes we must thoroughly evaluate our present condition. We may sub-consciously or innately realise that our church is not making great progress or achieving remarkable growth, but before we can remedy this we need to conduct a thorough and specific examination. Examination precedes diagnosis, and diagnosis precedes prognosis or cure. We need to examine the vital life signs.

In the course of a medical examination the Doctor will examine the pulse, blood pressures, respiration etc. These are the vital signs of life. What might be the vital life signs of a church? Here are some suggestions :-

- a) **LIFE.** (Animation, vigour, vitality, vivacity, spirit, energy.)
- b) **ACTIVITY.** (Useful, fruitful, productive activities.)
- c) **STRENGTH.** (Spiritual strength of the believers.)
- d) **GROWTH.** (Growing up into Christ and spiritual maturity.)
- e) **REPRODUCTION.** (Producing after one's kind. Gen. 1:11,12.)

Healthy growth is always multi-directional.

E.G. A plant or tree grows :-

UPWARD, Reaching towards the sun.

DOWNWARD, reaching down into the soil.

OUTWARD, in developing maturity and fruitfulness.

If it only grew upwards, without thrusting its root system into the ground at a commensurate rate, it could not stand for long. Growth that is not "balanced" is likely to collapse.

Jesus also exhibited multi-directional growth. Luke 2:52.

"and Jesus grew in

Wisdom, (Mental and intellectual development) and

Stature, (Physical, bodily growth) and in

Favour with God, (Spiritual growth and development) and

Favour with man." (Social, inter-personal development)

Church Growth is NOT simply a matter of increasing numbers or church attendance figures. It is not only a matter of **QUANTITY**, but also of **QUALITY**.

So the church should be growing and developing in several directions simultaneously :-

- In spiritual maturity. Eph. 4:15.
- In fellowship. Acts 2:41-47. Eph. 4:1-6, 15.
- In ministries. Rom 12: 3-8.
- In the exercise of spiritual gifts. 1 Cor. 12, -14.
- In witnessing and preaching. Acts 1:8. Mk. 16: 15-20.
- In making disciples. 2 Tim. 2:1,2.

- Church Planting. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, uttermost earth.
- In missionary activity. Matt. 28:19,20.

SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS.

- a) How do we measure up to the vital life signs?
- b) Apart from biological and transfer growth, at what % rate are we growing?
- c) Is our true growth rate exciting and satisfactory? Yes / No?

A DETERMINED RESPONSE.

God wants this church to grow in every way.

We want to discover His ways, co-operate with Him, and see it grow.

We will prayerfully discover and own His vision for our church and community.

By His grace, and with His help, this church is headed for dynamic growth.

2. COMMITTED TO THE VISION.

In a cooperative effort, such as Church Growth demands, everyone involved must be fully committed to the vision. That is :-

- Fully believe in it..
- See it as God's purpose for their Fellowship..
- Feel that they are an integral and important part of it..
- Commit themselves to whole hearted involvement in it..
- Be available to play whatever role the vision requires.
- Pray regularly for it.
- Be willing to invest finances, tithes, and offerings into it.

It is not sufficient to recognise it as "The Pastor's vision," or "The Church's vision." They must acknowledge it as -"**OUR VISION.**"

To achieve such a vision, the following things must happen :-

THE PASTOR (S)

Must wholly believe that God wants their church to grow.

Must gain a vision of what their church can become in God's purpose.

Must formulate realistic goals as to how this can happen.

Must have the love, respect, and confidence of the members.

Must clearly communicate the vision to them and win their involvement.

THE MEMBERSHIP.

Must love and respect their leaders and be eager to work with them

Must be excited about their church and believe in its future.

Must be convinced that Christ is the answer to all life's problems.

Must open their hearts and their pockets to fulfill the vision.

Must become wholly involved in whatever capacity is appropriate.

THE VISION MUST BE :-

INSPIRED, bearing indications of Divine inspiration.

DEFINED, and carefully thought through.

CLARIFIED, and clearly communicated.

EXCITING AND CHALLENGING.

REALISTIC AND ACHIEVABLE.

CAPABLE OF INVOLVING AND USING ALL AVAILABLE PERSONNEL.

THE LEADERSHIP AND MEMBERS SHOULD FACE THE FOLLOWING

- Do we truly want the church to grow?
- Are we willing to pay the price, whatever that might be?
- Do we truly have a vision for the growth of our church?
- Do we have a program of goals which will make it happen?
- Are we open to the changes which are inevitable?
- What are some of the things which would result in growth activity?
- What can I personally do to be effectively involved?
- What changes need to occur in our services to make them more attractive to strangers?
- Are we willing to allow the Holy Spirit to be Lord of our church?
- Will we be willing to attribute all the honour and praise to God alone?

Have the whole leadership and membership go through this list together.

Challenge every person to make their personal response to it.

Present it in some form of document so that each person can sign and retain it as a covenant of commitment.

ENTITLE IT, " **OUR COMMITMENT TO CHANGE AND GROWTH.**"

3. WHAT IS EVANGELISM?

Preaching and teaching will be required on the theme of evangelism to set the stage for new emphasis on reaching and retaining people for Christ.

Here are some simple definitions. Evangelism is :-

- Sharing the Good News about Jesus with others who do not know Him.
- Presenting the Good News to as many people as possible to bring them to a saving knowledge of Him.
- Evangelism is bringing Christ to others, and others to Christ.
- Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to get bread.

SOME OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WORDS RELATING TO EVANGELISM

- a) **Evangelise:** (evangelizo) Acts. 8:4. *"Therefore, the believers which were scattered abroad went everywhere **preaching** the message."*
- b) **Witness:** (martureo = martyrs.) Acts. 1:8. *"And you shall be **witnesses** unto Me, in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth."*
- c) **Proclaim:** (kerusso) Acts.8:5. *"Philip went down to Samaria and **proclaimed** Christ to them."*
- d) **Announce:** (katangelo) Acts. 17:3. *"This Jesus whom I **announce** unto you, is the Christ."*
- e) **Reason:** (dialagomi) Acts. 17:2. *"Paul **reasoned** with them out of the scriptures."*
- f) **Persuade:** (peitho) Acts. 18:4. *"And Paul reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and **persuaded** both Jews and Greeks."*
- g) **Make Disciples.** (matheteusate) Matt. 28: 19. *"Go ye therefore and **make disciples** of all nations."*

THE PROCESSES OF EVANGELISM HAVE BEEN PERCEIVED IN THE FOLLOWING SEQUENCE:-

- **Presence.**

The presence of a Christian is in itself, an evangelising factor. Through the life of a believer (witness), the pre-Christian has opportunity to see the Gospel lived out. We may be the only epistle that some people will ever read.
- **Pre-Evangelism.**

Is the preparatory work which must be done before the Gospel can be persuasively presented. This may involve friendship evangelism, where the believers genuinely befriend non believers. It involves earning credibility for the Gospel by your life, love, interest and compassion. In agricultural terms it is the clearing, ploughing and preparing of the ground before the work of sowing can begin.
- **Proclamation. (or Presentation.)**

This is the actual presentation of the Gospel when the person or target group is brought face to face with the Gospel of Christ. It is the presentation of the Gospel message in the clearest possible manner so that the hearers are fully informed of the truth and implications of the Good News about Jesus.
- **Persuasion.**

The aspect of presentation in which the person is actively persuaded to make a positive decision and response to the message. The Holy Spirit is actively involved and is the main factor in the persuasion process. Without His influence the persuasion is powerless. However, we the witness, must also be personally involved. The Holy Spirit will work through us. We therefore persuade men, on Christ's behalf, to be reconciled to God.
- **Integration.**

This involves the various steps necessary to get the new converts integrated into a local fellowship. The Holy Spirit inducts them into the Body of Christ spiritually. But we must also encourage them into the Body practically. In many ways catching the fish is

the easiest part. Keeping it and cleaning it is often the aspect requiring more patience, prayer and sacrifice. Particularly in the local church, real effort must be made to welcome the new believers, make room for them, involve them, place them in fellowship groups, follow up their commitment, and begin to build on their newly laid foundation.

- **Reproduction.**

The process of evangelism is not really complete until the new believer begins to "reproduce after their kind." New believers must immediately be made aware of their responsibility and privilege to share their testimony and faith with others. They must be encouraged and motivated to bring others to Christ. This cannot begin too soon. In fact the longer it is left, the harder it may become. Jesus told a new believer: "Go home and tell what great things the Lord has done for you." New believers usually make the best Soul Winners.

- There is an infectious enthusiasm in their new love relationship.
- They still have vital contact with their unconverted friends.
- The process of evangelism as they experienced it, is still fresh in their mind.
- They are much more aware of non-church culture, language, expectations.
- They relate much more easily to the pre-Christian community.

4. IS YOUR CHURCH INTROVERT, OR EXTROVERT?

The reason why many churches fail to see growth is that have become introvert in their attitudes and programs. The meaning of introvert is, "being primarily concerned with one's own thoughts and interests."

Sadly, many churches have become like this. They have become little "bless me clubs." Their programs, activities and plans are all primarily for the benefit of their members. Most of them are not consciously aware of this. They did not plan to become this way and are usually oblivious to the fact that they have become detached from the real life of their world. They unwittingly bear the marks of a recluse who has fled involvement in the real world to find isolation in a make believe one. They have created a "religious comfort zone," in which splendid isolation they faithfully practice their religious activities. They become inbred and unfruitful, making all kinds of "spiritual excuses" for their lack of outreach activity and growth.

In contrast, one of the definitions of extrovert is, "**mainly concerned with external (outside) things.**" This is the meaning with which I am concerned rather than the meaning frequently applied in which an extrovert is an "outrageously outgoing person."

The Church of Jesus Christ was never intended to be isolated and insulated from the world. It was intended to be a "Church without walls." Remember that the true Church is not a building, it is a redeemed and redemptive people. A pro-active people who go out into their world to assert the influence of the Kingdom. To conquer the enemy of mankind, and rescue men and women from the grip of their adversary.

We must certainly be dedicated to making our churches "user friendly." Creating an atmosphere and environment of open friendliness which makes new people feel abundantly welcome, at ease, and keen to return. Try to see your church through the eyes of a pre-Christian stranger! How do they see you, your activities and programs? Can they interpret and understand the religious ritual and tradition in which you may be involved. Can they understand the religious language which is frequently used in many churches? Is your message relevant and meaningful to their real needs. Is your Gospel truly **GOOD NEWS** to them in the situations of their life?

5. REMOVING THE INERTIA FACTORS.

Many churches appear to have imposed inertia factors which slow down, hinder, or even totally prevent any outgoing activity. Trying to get some churches moving is like driving a car with the hand brake firmly on. The average congregation has been conditioned to "sit down, keep quiet, and be good listeners."

Even the traditional structure of most church buildings, with platform, pulpit and pews, suggests that this is the main function of a church. The people have become content to attend church faithfully week by week to listen to sermons. This never was, and never will be what God intended for His Church. It is in complete contrast to the Church which the Holy Spirit commissioned on the Day of Pentecost. We must shake off this apathy and inactivity, arouse ourselves and do the work of evangelism -telling the lost that Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life. If all the Christian congregations around the world would become active in evangelism, the world could be won in a short time. Unfortunately the Army of the Lord is sleeping soundly in the barracks. We must sound the awake call.

Three most prevalent inertia factors are :-

- a) **Fear, or Timidity.**
- b) **Ignorance.** Not knowing how to go about evangelising.
- c) **Inexperience.** Not having done it sufficiently to gain confidence.

How can we shake off this inertia? By :-

- Powerfully challenging the people.
- Being an inspiring example to them.
- Providing training and motivation.
- Organising outreach activities.
- Making the church "user friendly."
- Keeping the growth emphasis before the people.

6. ENCOURAGING THE FRIENDSHIP FACTOR.

One of the sad features of assimilation of new believers into the Christian community is the manner in which their previous relationships with family and friends are frequently discarded and their new life involves only contact with fellow Christians. Now I realise that there has to come a "separation from the world, unto Christ," but I do not believe that this necessarily means that the new believers have to sever contact or disassociate themselves from their former social structure. If possible it is better for them to maintain meaningful contact and association in order to impact their acquaintances with the Gospel.

This is frequently called, "OIKOS EVANGELISM." The Greek word "oikos" is translated - **family, kindred, household**, (including servants) or **own**. Many who came to Christ in the New Testament were the oikos of a new convert. So oikos evangelism happens when a new convert reaches his family, associates and friends with the Gospel to bring them to Christ. This happened to Andrew. (John. 1:40,41.) *"One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah'."*

Many modern surveys on Church Growth have revealed that this method of evangelism is still the most fruitful style. A typical survey revealed the following about how people first came to church.

REASONS WHY PEOPLE FIRST CAME TO CHURCH.

In response to advertising.

2%

Because of the pastor.

6%

Through organised evangelistic outreach.

6%

Influence of friends and relatives.

86%

This kind of response seems to be reasonably consistent.

7. MENDING YOUR NETS.

Eph. 4:12. says that the primary work of the ministers is the "equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry."

The Greek word translated "equipping," - "katatimosos," is interpreted several different ways in other parts of Scripture.

One analogy is the setting of a broken bone, carefully joining the bone together again to restore its usefulness, strength, and effectiveness.

Another idea conveyed is that of "mending nets," to make them effective to their true purpose.

Many churches need to either mend or change their nets to make them effective for catching fish. (men, women, boys and girls.) Let us look briefly at some of these nets :-

a) Welcoming New People.

How effectively, or otherwise, does your church welcome new people?

Do you have people specially appointed to do this who can function effectively?

New comers should be warmly welcomed even outside the church.

They must be welcomed again at the door upon entering.

Someone should graciously help them to find a seat where they feel comfortable.

Others might have a ministry of sitting with new comers quietly helping them to understand and enjoy the service.

They should also be welcomed from the pulpit and perhaps presented with some souvenir of their visit.

Try to discreetly obtain their name and address for further contact.

Plan and structure your services so that pre-Christians will feel part of them.

b) Worship.

The "worship," in many churches is very sombre and serious.

The liturgy, (order of service) is extremely complicated, making people feel outsiders.

Such traditional, religious activities are often very uninspiring and depressive.

The church ought to be the happiest place in town.

Worship can be reverent without being slow, heavy, and tedious.

Avoid those solemn, slow, religious kind of hymns.

Include music which is joyful, uplifting, and inspiring.

Have the kind of celebrations to which people cannot wait to come back.

c) Preaching And Teaching.

There is a mistaken idea in many church circles that good preaching and teaching has to be a serious, sombre, heavy duty activity. I feel certain that the ministry of Jesus was not like that. Nor was the fiery preaching of John the Baptist, or of Paul, Peter and

other Bible preachers. Their preaching was relevant, dynamic and contemporary. It was said of Jesus that the "common (average) people heard Him gladly." In other words they found his teaching to be gripping and enthralling. He addressed the real, felt needs in their lives and presented ways in which their burdens could be lightened and they could experience rest and peace.

Good, effective Gospel preaching should never be negative and condemnatory. Even preaching the need for repentance can be done in a positive manner. People today are saddled with many and varied problems. They need to hear positive, constructive and helpful messages which will help them to find peace with God, with themselves and with their neighbour. Certainly good preaching should never be boring, -something which people must endure. Spice your messages with graphic illustrations. Speak about things with which people can readily identify. Never use religious jargon, phrases and words which no one but the initiated can understand. Aim to use every day language which the average person can readily understand and identify with.

MAKING AN ALTAR CALL. - (Inviting people to receive Christ.)

Part of the success of an effective Gospel preacher is the ability to motivate people to a decision at the end of his message. Here are some of the factors of which you need to be conscious :-

- **TIME FACTOR.** Timing is critical. Be sensitive about when to conclude your message and begin the appeal.
- **ENERGY FACTOR.** Don't exhaust yourself, or your listeners.
- **SMOOTHNESS FACTOR.** Carry through smoothly from your message, into the appeal. Plan your appeal as you plan your message. How much time do you spend preparing your message? Do you spend even half as much time preparing the appeal?
- **SPIRITUAL FACTOR.** Be led of the Spirit. Generally the one who has preached should also give the appeal.
- **EMOTIONAL FACTOR.** Don't be afraid of applying this and the music which can touch the emotions. People are emotive beings and most decisions have some legitimate emotional factor.
- **FAITH FACTOR.** Believe for results, envision them, expect them and get them.
- **VARIETY FACTOR.** Be flexible, not predictable. Use your sanctified imagination as you ask God to show you how to influence people towards Him.

d) Evangelism.

Paul encouraged Timothy to make the greatest use of his pastoral ministry by "doing the work of an evangelist." (2 Tim. 4:5) Every preacher, irrespective of his particular gifting, should introduce some evangelistic emphasis into his ministry. Every service can hold the potential of an evangelistic outcome if the preacher slants his message in that direction and concludes every meeting by giving pre-Christians a chance to confess Christ as Saviour and Lord. Once your congregation becomes aware of this emphasis they will feel more confident to invite friends and associates to join them in church regardless of what type of meeting it is planned to be.

There are many other effective ways in which evangelistic emphasis can be introduced into your church and program. Be creative about it. Ask God to show you new and different ways in which people can be reached and won. Unless you make this special kind of emphasis, your church is never likely to grow and you will miss the thrill and fulfilment of seeing what God can accomplish among you.

e) Specialised Groups.

There are numerous categories of human need which can be ministered to by giving opportunity for people to meet with other believers who face similar problems, e.g. "single mother's," "single persons," "deaf ministries," "senior citizens," etc. Other specialists groups which would require more attention, facilities and specialised workers are ministries to drug dependent people, care groups for persons who have experienced nervous breakdowns and similar ministries of compassion and care.

f) Cell Church Groups.

Cell groups are ideal settings for accomplishing various aspects of ministry which cannot be properly catered for in the larger celebration type of gathering. This style of structure will be very much in evidence in the churches of the future and we will devote more space to this subject later in the Manual.

g) Youth Ministries.

The needs of young people today are much more complex than previously. All over the world the youth of our nations are facing greater challenges and temptations than ever before. This requires a different approach, and emphasis than the more general church activities. It is essential and urgent that the church reaches and wins the youth of our nations. Many have said that they are "the church of tomorrow," but that is not true. They are THE CHURCH OF TODAY. It could well be said that,- "WHO WINS THE YOUTH OF TODAY, WINS THE WORLD OF TOMORROW." Every church needs to be acutely conscious of this great challenge and especially determined to take all necessary steps to ensure an effective program for young people.

h) Children's Activities.

What we have just said about the youth applies even more so to the children of our world. This is one of the most neglected mission fields in the world today. Yet this is surely a most strategic and highly important field. It is an area of mission into which I strongly believe every church should pour effort and passion. There are several good reasons why this is so :-

- Our world today has a very high percentage of children.
- They are faced with all manner of temptations and challenges.
- In many ways, children are much easier to win for Christ..
- "Save an adult and you save a soul. Save a child and you save a life"

For some strange reason children's ministries are usually the most neglected of all yet it is really the easiest to conduct and in many ways the most fruitful and fulfilling. You should prayerfully determine that this will be different in your church. Believe for some qualified and dedicated children's ministry workers and make every effort to make this the biggest department in your church.

8. BUILDING A CHURCH GROWTH "POWER-HOUSE."

The most effective church that ever existed began in a prayer meeting. (Acts 1 & 2)

The churches experiencing dynamic growth today emphasise prayer.

"More things are accomplished by prayer than this world dreams of."

I believe that the most powerfully strategic thing that any church that longs to grow can do initially, is to start a prayer group dedicated to pray for growth and increase.

- It need not be a large group to begin with.
- The leader must be the right person, possibly the pastor himself.
- It must be SPECIFICALLY praying for growth and increase.
- It must be a DEDICATED group, taking this role seriously.
- The members must be in right RELATIONSHIP.
- It should be an INFORMED group, knowledgeable about the church's program.
- It must be a group with the VISION firmly before them.
- Make sure it consists of people of FAITH who really believe God.
- People of genuine HUMILITY, who will give honour to the Lord.

9. USING ALL YOUR RESOURCES.

The *greatest resource* in any church is its *members*.

The *least utilised resource* in any church is its *members!*

Many pastors talk and teach a great deal about the "many membered body," but few of them demonstrate a genuine belief and confidence in those members. This is confirmed by the fact that they rarely ever use them to their fullest advantage. The church has an army, which is virtually "confined to barracks." There are people in almost every congregation who have skills and abilities which could be advantageously employed for the advancement of the Kingdom if the pastors would recruit, train and motivate them. The greatest single thing which any pastor can do is to get his members into harness and working in their various capacities for the extension of God's Kingdom.

THE CHURCH THAT PLANS TO GROW MUST FULLY UTILISE ITS GREATEST RESOURCE - ITS MEMBERS.

- Begin a series of teachings on the importance of BODY MINISTRIES.
- Actively search for potential leaders in your congregation.
- Invite them to some special gatherings for leadership training.
- Begin to encourage, disciple, and mentor them.
- Begin to use them in relatively small ways.
- As they develop and mature, try to use them increasingly.
- Encourage the congregation to respect and honour these ministries.

Once you have your greatest resource - your members, trained, there are many other resources you can develop.

START A VISITATION PROGRAM using your newly trained leaders to do the visitation.

Give them specific training on the ministry of visitation. Assign some to :-

- PASTORAL VISITATION. Visiting various members in need, sickness, problems etc.
- NEW CONVERT VISITATION. Following up new believers in their homes.
- EVANGELISTIC VISITATION. Visiting homes of prospects with a view to leading them to Christ.

HOUSE CHURCH PROGRAMS.

Organise outreach meetings in the various suburbs of your town, using the houses of your leaders for the venues. Let your newly trained leaders assume the oversight of them encouraging them to make these gatherings "Recruiting Centres" for the Kingdom.

The senior pastor(s) must retain the overall oversight of these outreaches, the local leader being an "under shepherd." Let the local leader realise that he or she, is a part of your pastoral team. Foster and encourage a strong "team spirit," amongst all the leadership. Encourage authority, submission, and respect of leadership amongst them.

SPECIAL "GUEST SERVICES."

- Plan to have a monthly guest service in the main church congregation.
- Encourage every member to bring a "guest."
- Precede the meeting with an informal meal where everyone can meet and mingle.
- Try to have a "guest speaker."
- Bring in a guest singer, or some guest to give a dynamic testimony.
- Make the service a dynamic evangelistic emphasis service.
- Conclude with a strong call for salvation.

10. REPRODUCING AFTER YOUR KIND.

Determine to be an outreach church which plants "daughter" churches. One of the clearest signs of healthy maturity is that of reproduction. God designed the human race to reproduce but it requires healthy development and a measure of maturity to achieve the reproduction stage. Write into your church vision, at the earliest opportunity that your fellowship is a Church Planting fellowship.

Chapter Six

STRATEGISING FOR CHURCH GROWTH

The very word strategy seems to intimidate some pastors. They seem to feel that it implies a reliance upon human effort rather than upon God. The fact is that God Himself is a strategist and if we are to help fulfill His purposes, we too will need to become strategists.

1. WHAT IS STRATEGY ?

Here are some simple, brief definitions :-

"To determine a long term plan or policy."

"The policy chosen in order to accomplish a specific task."

"The methods employed to achieve a particular purpose."

Here are some words which the dictionary offers to describe strategy :-

PLAN, SCHEME, SYSTEM, TACTICS, METHODS, PROCEDURE.

Strategy is a word which is frequently used in terms of tactics of war.

It is the art of deploying troops, ships, aircraft, etc, into favourable positions from which to inflict defeat upon the enemy.

**A Strategy is a well conceived, long term plan
designed to achieve a consistent and lasting result.**

So strategising involves :-

- Examining the situation.
- Prescribing solutions.
- Determining tactics.
- Employing procedures.
- Monitoring effectiveness.
- Adjusting the methods.
- Achieving the goals.

2. WHY DO WE NEED TO STRATEGISE FOR CHURCH GROWTH?

The idealist may say, "If God wants the Church to grow it will do so without our plans and efforts."

The plain fact is that God Himself is a strategist. He formed a strategy for the redemption of mankind. The Bible tells us that this was formulated, "Before the foundation of the world."

"Christ was indeed foreordained before the foundation of the world." 1Pet.1 :20.

"The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Rev. 13:8.

"God chose us in Christ, before the foundations of the world." Eph. 1 :4.

"The Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matt.25:34.

- **God Formed A Plan Before The Earth Was Created. Eph. 1 :4.**
- **Jesus Was Ordained To His Redemptive Task.**
Rev. 13:8.
- **The Holy Spirit Is Deeply Involved In The Strategy Of Redemption.**
The Holy Spirit is the agent of redemption who empowers and energises those ordained by God to build and extend the Church.
- **The Strategy Of The Church Was Fore-Ordained In Eternity.**
The whole history of the Church, from its inception to conclusion was planned in minute detail even before the world began. In the prophetic purposes of God it will fulfill every aspect of God's eternal purpose. It is a sobering thought to contemplate that God will fulfill His purpose, with or without, our cooperation. The aspect which our cooperation and faith will determine is what role we may be privileged to play in His purposes.
- **Jesus Gave The Church A Clear Strategy.**
Acts. 1 :8.
The Objective: Reaching the entire world with the Gospel.
The Strategy: (His disciples would accomplish the task)
The Method. (The disciples would proclaim the Gospel)
Their Authority. (Lo I am with you always)
Short Term Goal. (In Jerusalem.)
Medium Range Goal. (Judea, and Samaria.)
Long Term Goal. (Uttermost parts of the earth.)
Time Frame. (even to the end of the Ages)
- **The Church Is Destined To Grow And Inherit The Kingdom.**
Jesus said, "*Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give to you the Kingdom.*" Luke. 12 :32. The Church, as a vital part of the "seed of Abraham," is destined to inherit the Kingdom and be a blessing to all nations of earth.

3. TEN STEPS TO ACHIEVING AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY.

a) **Realistic Assessment.**

This first step requires absolute objective honesty. It is essential to analyse your past and present situation. To ask, and answer, some very pertinent questions about your church's progress, or lack of. e.g.

- How long has your church been in existence?
- What is the size of the present active membership?
- Divide B by A = growth per year of existence.
- Portray this trend on a graph. How does it look?
- What immediate action should be taken?

b) **Forward Projection.**

If the present trend continues, where will your church be in 10 years? If the growth factor is minimal, particularly in terms of young people being added, the church may not be here in ten years from now. If the growth rate is anything less than exciting and satisfactory, you need to urgently formulate a new strategy.

c) Definite Decisions.

The church leadership must prayerfully decide to find a new, effective, productive strategy. Some hard, definitive decisions need to be made NOW. Someone needs to "bite the bullet." Acknowledging that present trends are far from satisfactory and a new and vital strategy is urgently required is the first step towards a solution.

d) Analyse The Objectives.

Serious, positive, prayerful consideration must be given to the real objectives of the church. A fresh analysis of "Why are we here? What are we supposed to be achieving? Are we succeeding? If not, why not? " A new statement of purpose needs to be formulated. Probably a time of repentance is needed in which we acknowledge before God that we have not been fulfilling His mandate as we should. Then let's clarify the objectives again. List them, hold them before God in prayer. Cry out for His help to achieve them. Understand right now that no human strategy is going to meet the need or accomplish the task. We need God given objectives and a God given strategy. We need to aim for His objectives, and the fulfilment of His purposes.

e) Describe The Solution.

The objectives are, "Where are we heading for?" The solution is "How shall we get there?" So we need some specifics in our solution. It is not sufficient to make vague statements like, "We are going to grow." We need to find out from God just how He will cause us to grow. We need to wait upon Him until some specifics start to come into focus. If we are sincere and honest, God will start to share some specifics with us. As we whole-heartedly follow through on these, the Holy Spirit will pave the way for growth and development. Quite often He will begin with a time of cleansing and pruning. Sometimes, when God begins to work in a congregation, some will rise up against what He is doing. Some will become unhappy. Some may actually leave the church. Unfortunately this is often necessary before God can begin to bring growth to that church.

f) Examine The Motives.

At this point the issue of motive is often brought into focus. It is foundational to revival and growth that the motives be honest and righteous. There are sometimes many carnal reasons why a pastor or leadership may want their church to grow. It may be out of a carnal sense of ego, or religious pride. It may be a desire to achieve something, to be admired or envied. Obviously these are all unworthy motives which God will never bless and no amount of strategising or planning will make anything worth-while happen in these conditions.

g) Define The Strategy.

Remember that strategy is "Forward planning." Looking into the future. Determining the possibilities in God. Formulating a strategy, plan, tactics, which will cause growth to occur. Such a strategy must not be abstract. IT MUST INVOLVE SPECIFICS. Your God ordained future, and that of your Church, IS FILLED WITH SPECIFICS. How your Church can grow. The methods which can bring about such growth. When the growth may begin. Who should be involved. The specifics will refer to

- HOW?
- WHEN?
- WHAT?
- WITH WHOM?

The specifics will include, numbers, size, dates, costs, etc.

It will include short term goals, long term goals and specify the time element in which these should happen.

h) Evaluate The Results.

Your strategy should include some principles and ways for consistent evaluations to be made. This will require statistics to be kept, including attendance at all meetings and events. Number of persons making a commitment to Christ. Number of persons baptised in water, and in the Holy Spirit. All these facts will be part of the vision for growth and must be faithfully recorded and regularly evaluated. e.g. Your first year goal of seeing 250 brought to Christ can be monitored each month because it will mean an average of 5 persons per week, or 20 persons per month must be making commitments if your goal is to be realised.

i) Re-Align The Program.

According to the results which are being achieved, or may not be realised, adjustments can be made in the program. New personnel may be brought in, new methods employed, adjustments made here and there, and a fine tuning of the strategy effected. These adjustments are like "in-flight corrections," they can only be made once the program is moving and you have opportunity to monitor its real effectiveness. These kind of adjustments cannot be made in your initial forward planning strategy. They only become evident when the program is actually in use.

j) Reward The Workers.

As the new strategy goes forward and some desired results achieved, the "team spirit" of the leadership needs to be kept in good condition. This kind of growth can only be realised and sustained by a team and one which is working in good harmony together. For this reason it is essential that the workers are able to share in the rewards and the "spoils of victory." Each member should be recognised and due appreciation afforded. The achievements and advances can only be made when each member is effectively fulfilling their role.

4. DISTINCT BENEFITS OF A SOUND STRATEGY.

- I. You know where you are going.**
- II. Your church knows where it is going.**
- III. You can foster a good team spirit.**
- IV. You can utilise more workers.**
- V. You can share the work load more effectively.**
- VI. You can multiply efficiency through delegation.**
- VII. You can require more effective accountability.**
- VIII. You can monitor results more accurately.**
- IX. You can make corrections and adjustments en- route.**
- X. You know when you have achieved your goal.**

5. ARE STATISTICS REALLY NECESSARY?

Some pastors and churches have an aversion to numbers and statistics claiming that "counting is carnal," and they sometimes quote God's judgement on Israel when King David numbered the nation.

(1 Chron.1:21) But it was David's *motive* which God judged, not his *action*, for God had actually commanded Moses to number the nation in Numbers. 1 :1,2. So beware of using numbers for purposes of pride or self gratification, but realise also that statistics can be

legitimate and helpful. The history of the early church, (Acts of Apostles) is replete with numbers and documented statistics.

Numbers and statistics are :-

Measurable.

Universally understandable.

Accurate and reliable.

Indicators of progress. (or otherwise)

They make possible:-

Accurate accountability.

Effective stewardship.

Effectual accomplishment.

6: THE POWER OF GOAL SETTING.

Once again, as with our comments on statistics, there are many pastors who have an aversion to goal setting. (This aversion to statistics and goal setting is frequently amongst those who need to give serious consideration to both. It often covers an unwillingness to face up to the realities of an unsatisfactory performance record.) The proven fact is that without the use of goal projections and forward planning, few things of value would ever be accomplished.

Here are some basic comments to consider.

a) Goal Setting Is Biblical.

Paul frequently uses sporting analogies to depict the manner in which he pursued his spiritual life. He speaks about running the race with patience and determination. No runner can do this unless his goal is clear, to reach the finishing line ahead of his competitors. In all the disciplines required of a serious athlete, the setting of goals is essential to success.

b) Goal Setting Is Positive And Productive.

The human being is structured in such a way that we can only perform and achieve effectively if we have a clear sense of direction and purpose. So realistic and achievable goals are beneficial and inspirational. They have a positive and anabolic effect on us which brings out the best and enables us to perform to our highest potential.

c) Goal Setting Is Essential To Good Performance.

In whatever areas of life we consider, whether business, sporting activities, achievements of every kind, wherever good performance is required, it is essential to set your goals and dedicate yourself to their fulfilment. Everyone needs some goals in life, for without them life becomes without direction or purpose. We meander through life without direction or fulfilment if we do not define and set our goals and then make realistic plans to fulfill them.

d) Goal Setting Can Be God Glorifying.

As Paul neared the end of his life he rejoiced that he was prepared to meet his Lord. He had "fought a good fight, finished the race, kept the faith." This kind of fulfilment could only be possible for one who had set himself those goals and striven towards them with dedicated purpose. If we do not set ourselves a similar goal now, we may never be able to share that kind of rejoicing with Paul

e) **Little Is Accomplished Without Goal Setting.**

This is true in any sphere of life and it is true in respect of spiritual achievements. If you do not set a goal before your church little progress or growth will be experienced. The secret is to set the goals in cooperation with the Lord. Let His goals become your goals. Unless you set some goals your vision will always lack shape and dimension. It will be abstract and nebulous and you will never know whether or not you have accomplished your purpose.

7. **BE PREPARED FOR CHANGES.**

as it is to lose members it is often inevitable and frequently necessary for such people to go. It is often their subtle influences which have unobtrusively stifled growth and until those influences are either forsaken or taken away, the changes which will bring new life and growth cannot happen. Others may stay and resist the changes and such resistance will have to be recognised and dealt with because unity of purpose is essential to the successful implementation of a strategy which will cause effective growth.

One of the most difficult things for many churches to cope with is change. A favourite phrase seems to be, " we don't do things that way in this church." Well the fact that must be faced is that doing things the way you have always done them has possibly not produced any great measure of growth, and if you continue to do things that way you can only expect more of the same. If things are going to improve, grow, and develop, **there will have to be some radical changes.** So everyone involved, from the leadership to the membership, will have to accept some changes. Initially this may not be easy.

Some people are more entrenched in their traditions and ways than you or they ever realised. Some may resent the changes to the degree that they leave your church.

Chapter Seven

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF CHURCH GROWTH

Some aspects and ingredients of a successful Church Growth program may vary from place to place depending on unique local circumstances. But there are other aspects, most of them biblically authenticated, which seem to be common and integral to effective church growth wherever it occurs. Let us look briefly at some of these factors.

1. DEDICATED AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP.

Firstly please note that a leader may be genuinely dedicated without necessarily being effective. (i.e. producing the intended result.) Such leaders may be dedicated, devoted, sincere, hard working, yet not effective. They do not get the job done!

Effectiveness basically means -"efficient at getting the job done." No matter what areas he may excel in, if the real task is not accomplished successfully, then the leader is NOT effective. What are some of those things which make a leader effective?

a) He Must Know Where He Is Going.

The effective leader is primarily a visionary. He sees into the future, discerns what God wants to accomplish, and dedicates himself to being part of its fulfilment.

b) He Can Persuade People To Be Part Of The Vision.

Probably the main indication of a good leader is that *people follow him*. If nobody is following you, then you are **NOT** an effective leader.

c) He Can Communicate The Vision Clearly.

The effective leader is not a visionary in the sense that his objectives are vague and ethereal. He is able to define and detail the vision and communicate it powerfully in an easily understandable form. He is able to impart the vision to others so that they become part of it.

d) He Is A Challenging Motivator.

Not only does he discern and define the direction of the church, he is able to powerfully motivate the members to become a dedicated part of the fulfilment of its vision for growth and reproduction.

e) He Is An Inspiring Role Model.

An effective leader, leads his people by going ahead of them and thus showing the way and modelling how to proceed.

f) He Is A Person Of Faith.

Fulfilling God's purpose is impossible without faith. (Heb. 11 :6.) To borrow a phrase from Dr. Robert Schuller, the leader must be a "Possibility Thinker." He must think and talk creative faith thoughts. But more than this he must also be able to "put legs on those ideas" and make them work by faith.

g) He Has Consistent Character Credibility.

Every Church seems to possess its own character and personality. Ideally this should mirror the character of God. But it also reflects the character of the leadership too. Someone has said that "God cannot build His Church any bigger than He can build its leaders." The principle which God has built into nature of every seed producing after

its own kind remains true in churches too. What a grave responsibility and a tremendous challenge to church leaders!

2. A DEDICATED, ACTIVE, AND ORGANISED MEMBERSHIP.

The main task of a pastor is to train and prepare his members to "do the work of the ministry." Eph. 4 :11, 12. Therefore the members are, to a large degree, what he has made or not made them. There are certain characteristics desirable in Church members of which we should always be conscious and which we should seek with all our abilities to inculcate.

a) A People Who "Know Their God."

"The people that know their God, shall be strong and do exploits." Dan. 11 :32.

Christianity is not a message, a philosophy or a theology, it is a Person. Paul's overwhelming ambition was to know that Person, "in the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings and conformity to His death." Phil. 3:10. Our task, our redemptive purpose, is to introduce people to that Person. In order to do this we ourselves must truly know Him. The better we know Him, the more effective we will be for Him.

b) A People Of Prayer.

Prayer is essentially communion with God. Spending time with Him, getting to know Him better, and being changed into His likeness. The intimacy of prayer is the atmosphere in which God shapes and moulds His people, preparing them for every good work.

c) A People Filled With The Spirit.

This dynamic experience has been described in various terms and a great deal of controversy has developed over various interpretations. Whatever our particular view or conviction may be, God has commanded each one of us to be "filled with the Spirit," and irrespective of what our theology or definition may be we are under orders to be filled with God's Spirit. We need the power, authority and ability which only He can give.

d) Committed To Kingdom Growth.

Although our subject is Church Growth our mentality and vision should be Kingdom Growth, for this is the wider view and the one which God delights to honour. If we "tunnel vision," and are only concerned with the growth of "our church," we may well be imprisoned by a selfish view which God cannot really bless. We must rise above the "my church, or my denomination" view, and see the greater picture of God's Kingdom. This is a much healthier and more fruitful concept.

e) Open To Necessary Changes.

One of the most prevalent obstacles to growth is an unwillingness to see the status quo changed. Religious tradition clings to the past and to what has always been. But growth will demand change and unless we are willing to accommodate it we shall never experience growth. For many this requires a real deliverance from religious tradition.

f) Activated And Organised.

The picture of the early church is of a divinely activated Body, organised for efficiency and effectiveness and this formula works today too. Show me a church where the members have been inspired, challenged and activated, and those members have been trained and organised into effective service, and I will show you a church which cannot help but grow. Body evangelism is the surest way to growth and development.

g) United And Loyal.

David says, *"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for God's people to dwell in unity,... for THERE the Lord has commanded His Blessing."* Psa.133.

Genesis. 11 :6. reminds us that when a people are united in their purpose, nothing which they conceive will be withheld from them. If this is true of the unGodly, how much more it is true of God's people? A true unity makes God's people invincible. In order to achieve such a unity there is an essential requirement for loyalty, without which unity can never be maintained. This includes loyalty to God, His Church, the leadership and program of the church.

3. A PROGRAM WHICH SERVICES THE NEEDS OF THE CONGREGATION.

Everyone has certain basic areas in their lives which need to be ministered to. These needs relate to their personal, domestic, family, and business life. Pastors should always remember that their members live out there in a hostile environment with very real problems which confront and challenge them every day. They need encouragement, direction, real fellowship, and practical teaching which will help them maintain victory and fulfilment in their every-day lives. In order to fill these real needs the church must minister at three basic levels :-

- **Celebration.**

When the whole fellowship meets corporately to rejoice and worship God together.

- **Congregation.**

This includes the congregating of special interest groups. e.g. youth, young couples, senior citizens, music teams, solo parents, children's church, new converts class, etc. (some of these groups may number 40, or 50 persons.)

- **Cell Groups.**

(Sometimes called Home Care Fellowship.) Small, committed groups of caring people, ministering to each other and reaching into their community.

Let's take a closer look at each of these.

a) Celebration.

This is the large, public gathering of the whole local fellowship to worship God together, to hear God's Word expounded, and to preach the Gospel to any pre-Christians who may be present. This usually occurs once or twice weekly. e.g. Sunday morning and evening. Notice the emphasis on **CELEBRATION**. Most churches need to learn how to celebrate. Many Church gatherings are like funerals instead of weddings. We need to remember that God commanded His people to rejoice as they kept the great Feasts together. God's people need opportunity to express their joyful praises with other like minded people. Music should be expressive and joyful. Everyone needs to experience times of joy and rejoicing. It edifies and strengthens the life. One of the most attractive features of a growing church is usually the music, singing, praise and worship and joyful atmosphere. Obviously this can be tailored to some degree to suit the particular type of people who constitute the fellowship, but the main ingredients of praise, worship, joyful expression, and emotional release should be common to every fellowship gathering. I have a simple saying, which I believe every pastor needs to believe. "It's O.K. to be happy!!!" Preach and practice it.

b) This is also a good time for Relevant And Dynamic Preaching.

The dynamic preaching of Jesus attracted multitudes of people wherever He went. The average persons were enthralled by His teaching. Our preaching too can be an attractive and compelling feature of our celebrations. Preaching should never be boring. Some motivators recommend the "AIDA" principle for effective communication :-

- A** Attention getting. - Grab the people's interest, and hold it throughout.
- I** Informative. - Give your listeners something of substance.
- D** Decision oriented. Preach for decisive results.
- A** Action. Follow through to inspire positive action.

Pastor, major on developing your preaching and platform skills and abilities.

"It pleased God, through the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believed." (1 Cor. 1 :21.)

- **Preach Jesus.**
- **Preach The Bible.**
- **Preach With The Anointing Of The Holy Spirit.**
- **Preach To Heal People's Hurts.**
- **Be Real, Not Religious.**
- **Be Interesting And Helpful.**
- **Be Practical.**
- **Preach For Results.**

c) Congregational Participation.

Your congregation needs to sense and feel that they are actually an integral part of the celebration and not merely spectators or listeners. This can be accomplished initially through praise and worship into which the people are willingly drawn. Being one with a worshipping body of people is an inspiring and edifying experience that is extremely therapeutic and rewarding.

You can also make your congregation part of the experience by relating to them realistically. Establish a spiritual rapport or relationship with the people. Never see the congregation as an audience who are there to witness your "performance." Rather see yourself as a "High Priest" whose privilege it is to lead the people into the throne room of God.

Have the people join together in prayer with you for the various needs that are represented. Some churches effectively encourage the people to form "prayer circles" at some time during the service. Each circle is then encouraged to pray for specific needs within that circle.

d) Opportunity For Ministry And Prayer.

In every service there are people who are hurting and need encouragement and prayer. It is not sufficient to preach to them, you must also give them opportunity to receive personal ministry and prayer. This can often be accomplished most readily by calling the people forward at the close of the service in an "altar call." You should also invite people to wait behind afterwards and make help available to them through yourself, or one of your appointed counsellors.

4. CONGREGATION.

This involves the formation of special interest groups in which people can meet. It enables the church to minister more specifically than in the general atmosphere of the celebration. Some churches choose to have an evening when all these electives are available in the church facility. For example, the whole family may go to church together but when they arrive Dad goes to Men's Fellowship, Mum to the Women's Fellowship, teens to the Youth, or Choir, or Music group practice.

This style of gathering helps people to congregate with their peers with whom they share special common interests. It also enables various departments e.g. Music group, Choir, Drama group, Soul Winner's Fellowship, to develop their various ministries.

Each "congregation" functions under competent appointed leadership which is answerable to, and under the covering of some member of the Pastoral Team.

5. CELL GROUPS.

This ministry appears under a variety of names and varies slightly in its style and function from church to church. But the basic idea is that of small groups which meet regularly for fellowship, instruction, activities and evangelism. The fact is that there are certain ministries which Jesus told us to perform for one another which cannot occur effectively in the large, impersonal setting of celebration, or congregation. They require the smaller, less formal, more intimate environment of a small group.

There are probably two major ways in which cell groups operate in church life.

- i) The church which meets primarily in celebration and congregation, but also has cell groups.
- ii) The church which functions in cell groups but also meets from time to time in celebration and congregation.

I believe that both models are legitimate, but of the two the second model is probably more biblical (closer to the New Testament model) and I believe that it is also the model of the future. Around the world, sometimes by choice, and sometimes by pressure, this model is emerging as the pattern of the future church.

Both models have merit and a great deal in common. Both of them :-

- Meet in small groups, say 8 -15 persons.
- Usually meet in a private home.
- Are informal in character.
- Meet for mutual edification.
- Endeavour to meet felt needs of cell members.
- Are overseen by "lay leaders."
- Under the overall authority of the local church.

The first model is the better known and most widely practised of the two, but I will concentrate my remaining remarks on the second -the cell group church.

The cell group church is a net-work of reproducing cells which meet locally during the week for fellowship and activities, and gather together periodically for celebration and congregation.

Each cell is comprised of a small group of believers, usually between 8 -15 persons.

Each has a leader, and deputy leader.

Their agenda is usually comprised of 4 types of activity :-

a) **Loving.**

The loving care and nurturing of each other. Here is an opportune venue for building relationships, between individuals, couples, families, relation-ships in which a family may "adopt" a single person. etc. The informal atmosphere of a cell group setting, enables people to relax and be themselves. They are better able to get to know other people in a more realistic manner than is possible in larger, formal gatherings.

Here a person can experience acceptance, interest, fellowship, and caring.

The cell group gatherings should NOT take the form of another church service.

The activities should be quite different. It should be far more informal and relaxed than are church services. Some of the legitimate activities include eating together, informal

conversation, mutual sharing of experiences, problems, hopes and aspirations. Some of the evening's activities might include

Barbecues, "parties," games, testimonies, sing-songs, "getting to know you" nights. Other events could include weekends away together, special holiday outings, picnics and outdoor games.

b) Learning.

The Bible becomes the work book from which the ethics and principles of life are shared and learned together. The teaching mode should not be that of preaching or lecturing, but rather of mutual study and sharing. Everyone should have a chance to participate. Major emphasis should be given to subjects which cover the every day issues and problems of life, including, marriage, family life, financial management, coping with stress, overcoming guilt and similar subjects. Opportunity must be made for questions, discussion, personal testimonies, and the like. The subjects should not be taught in an intellectual or academic manner only. Effort must be made to ensure that people truly understand and are able to practice the truths they have learned.

c) Decision Making.

Although each cell has a designated leader, the whole group should share in determining what the program and activities of the group might consist of. Times of mutual sharing, planning and making decisions about activities and projects should be shared regularly. These decisions should not only cover the various programs for forthcoming meetings, they should also include planning of projects, mission trips etc. Here are some decisions which might be made :-

- Where to meet, how often, and when?
- The teaching emphasis for the next three months.
- What goals to set for the coming year.
- How to encourage the attendance of pre-Christians.
- How to best assimilate new members.
- What is the Holy Spirit saying to the group?
- What are we going to do about it?

d) Action Taking.

Each cell should have some special tasks or missions which gives them a focus outside of themselves. It should also aim to undertake some practical projects in which all can participate, for the good of some member. Some of these activities might include :-

Services to the elderly.

Gardening, house painting, cleaning, washing, transport when needed. etc.

Services to single parents.

Baby sitting, hospitality, house repairs.

Ministry to children.

Run children's clubs, children's adventure club.

Ministry to Youth.

Friendship to lonely youths. Weekend camping expeditions, fishing etc.

Ministry in the Community.

Senior citizen's home visitation. hospital, or prison visitation.

Reach-out to your neighbourhood.

Barbecues, or family fun nights, video evenings etc.

World Mission project.

Tradesmen to work on a building project overseas.

Evangelism.

Sponsor various evangelistic outreaches and events.

SOME BENEFITS OF THIS STYLE OF STRUCTURE.

It Involves More Leaders. (Shepherds.)

Spreads the work load of shepherding more evenly making more shepherding skills available.

Provides More Training Opportunities For New Leadership.

On the job training is readily available to greater numbers.

Better Environment For Life Transformation To Happen.

Discipleship and life transformation cannot happen too effectively in the celebration style environment. The inter-personal relationship style of cell groups is much more appropriate.

Most Effective Way To Care For The Members.

More practical attention and care can be made available through this style.

Can Readily Multiply By Reproduction.

As potential leaders become experienced in this type of program the opportunities for forming more groups increases and leadership is already prepared and ready to assume leadership responsibilities.

Provides Effective Bases For Evangelism.

Cell group meetings provide excellent locations and environments for reaching into the surrounding community through evangelistic activities. They also provide an excellent venue for assimilating new believers.

Can Easily Be Adapted To Local Church.

The cell group system can easily be adapted to the local church. Whatever particular style is adopted it is a relatively easy matter to adapt it to the local situation.

6. REACHING OUT INTO THE COMMUNITY.

No Church will see effective growth until it shifts its vision from internal to the external. Jesus said, "*Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest.*" This is the very first step towards effective evangelism and church growth. Lifting up your gaze from the local, parochial matters, and allowing your attention to fix on the harvest fields around you.

No farmer will ever reap a harvest by staying home at the farm. He must shift his attention to the fields and then get out there and begin to prepare for a harvest. The eternal, never changing laws of the harvest decree that the seed must be sown, watered, fertilised, weeded and cared for before a harvest can ever be reaped. The church without a viable outreach into the local community is the church that will ultimately wither and die. But that church which lifts its vision, focuses its attention on the fields, and then gets out there prepared to work and labour will surely see a harvest. For "*Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy, and he who continually goes forth weeping bearing seed for sowing, shall undoubtedly come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*" (Psa. 126 : 5,6.)

7. CONSERVING THE HARVEST.

I have observed, and proven personally, that the real challenge is not only to bring people to a decision for Christ, but an even greater challenge is to establish and disciple those new believers. Many churches that have a dynamic evangelistic program do not grow at the rate they should because they do not sufficiently emphasise the need to conserve the results. The ministry of conservation is one of which it is almost impossible to exaggerate the importance. It is frequently perceived to be less glamorous than evangelism but is in fact more important. Unless the gains are conserved, all the previous effort has been wasted. So, the church which is committed to growth must treat this matter of conservation very seriously. Dedicated personnel must be thoroughly trained and prepared. Suitable literature must be obtained. New believers' classes should be held. Visitation must be undertaken. No effort should be spared, and every effort must be made, to ensure that the new believers are integrated into the Body and effectively disciplined.

Chapter Eight

THE MECHANICS OF CHURCH GROWTH

I am using the word "mechanics" in the sense of **the principles, or functional aspects that make something work.**

1. SEE THE LONG TERM OBJECTIVE.

Sometimes we use the word "vision," but some understand a vision to be the biblical, supernatural type of vision, whereas what we are speaking about is the idea, concept, or picture of what God wants to accomplish in and through our church. We are endeavouring to see into the future and obtain an image of the long term purpose that God wants to accomplish.

This is something we want to *see* with the *eyes of our spirit*. A picture we want God to burn into our heart and mind. Something which will be with us day and night, waking or sleeping. An ever present awareness of what God desires for the future life and ministry of our church. The more we think and pray about it the clearer this picture should become. It is the objective towards which our life and ministry is taking us.

To ensure that this objective is not a vague or hazy dream we need to wait on God in our spirit for a clearer, better defined understanding of the vision. We need to pray for more specific details of how this church will be. God will cause the vision to be multi-dimensional. We will see it, feel it, hear it. In our spirits we will be transported into it and get the prophetic sense and feel of it. It will become more real to us than is the present reality of what our church currently is.

Then we need to commit all this to writing. Patiently write down every detail you *see* in the vision which God is imparting to you. Make it as specific and realistic as possible.

2. DETERMINE THE ROUTE.

Determining the way or course to be taken to get us from one place to another. i.e. from where we are, to where God wants to take us. This is sometimes referred to as "establishing the goals or steps we must take to get to where we want to go."

Let me suggest a simple exercise to illustrate the basic idea of this. Supposing you heard about a Leadership Seminar to be held next year in the Full Gospel Church, Seoul, Korea. You know something of Dr. Cho's reputation as a church builder and you have a strong desire to attend this seminar.

THE OBJECTIVE is to attend that seminar.

THE ROUTE consists of the steps you must take to achieve that objective.

So, let's consider the steps you would need to take. Sit down and think about it. Write down systematically all the steps you must take.

Find out all about it.

WHEN will it be held?

WHERE will it be held?

WHO will the speakers be?

WHAT will their subjects be?

HOW MUCH will it cost to attend? Registration -accommodation?

Send off your application. Make sure you are eligible and can gain acceptance.

Inquire about possible flights to Korea. Phone all the airlines. Ask about routes. Inquire about prices.

Passport. Do you have a valid one?

Visas. What type of visa will you need?

Can you get leave from your job or church?

Who may look after your church whilst you are absent?

Arrange for your family's welfare in your absence.

Put this into your diary and schedule for next year.

Book your air tickets.

Plan your departure.

This is a simple idea of the various steps you would need to take to fulfill the objective of attending a Seminar. Now, envisage where God wants your church to go, and plot the route of how you will get there.

3. SELECT AND PREPARE THE PERSONNEL.

Choosing the right people to help you fulfill the vision is absolutely vital. It is good to build your team as early as possible though restricted finances in the earlier stages may make this difficult. Look for these qualities :-

a) **Qualified and Capable.**

If the person is not already trained and qualified, make sure they have the potential to accomplish the work for which they are chosen.

b) **Willing To Work.**

Not everyone who is qualified will actually work hard. Make sure that your co-workers are willing to work hard to fulfill the vision.

c) **Teachable Spirit.**

Humility and a teachable spirit are essentials.

d) **Compatible.**

Able and willing to get along well with others as a team.

e) **Loyalty.**

Your ministry team set the example for the whole church and it is essential that they are seen to be loyal to your leadership, the team, the program and the church.

Here are some further considerations :-

Always choose staff to complement your ministry, not to compete with it.

Choose some persons who will do the things which are not your greatest strengths.

Aim to have a balanced staff to cover a wide range of duties.

Administrative gifts are equally important.

4. DELEGATE THE RESPONSIBILITIES.

Delegation includes :-

Defining the tasks to be accomplished.

Describing those tasks. (Ideally on paper)

Delegating the tasks. (Entrusting them to another)

N.B. The Responsibility should be assigned, and then the authority.

Always look for those who are seeking responsibility, not authority!

5. OVERSEE THE PROGRESS.

Once the program of Church Growth is launched it must be monitored frequently, regularly, and consistently. The best way to do this is by holding regular staff meeting at which all members must be present and present a report of their departments. A good time to do this is often on Tuesday morning. The weekend can then be constructively reviewed, observations can be made, various reports given, and the future prayerfully discussed. In this way the whole team can keep abreast of current developments.

6. RECTIFY AND ADJUST THE PROGRAM.

Some problems do not manifest themselves until the program is under way. However they should be recognised as early as possible and immediate steps taken to solve problems and make necessary adjustments to any aspect of the program which is not working well.

If there are problems with individual team members these should not be dealt with in the Staff meetings. Appointments must be made privately with such members so that their performance can be discussed confidentially between you and them.

7. REJOICE AND RE-DEDICATE.

As evidences of growth and development are observed let the whole team rejoice together in the victories which God is giving. Avoid any tendency towards complacency or a feeling that "we have made it!" Keep the sharp edge of your ministries well honed. As you celebrate achievements, remember also to have frequent times of re-dedication when the whole team acknowledges its total dependence on God and makes a fresh commitment to love and serve Him in His Body.

Chapter Nine

SMALL churches CAN BE BEAUTIFUL TOO

With all our emphasis on Church Growth and its relevant statistics, it might be easy to gain the impression that only big is beautiful and this is certainly not the case. Obviously larger churches claim our attention and sometimes become the criteria towards which we aim in projecting the concept of Church Growth. We may even feel guilty that our church is so much smaller, but actually large churches are the exception rather than the rule. A reliable source has furnished the following figures concerning the average size of churches world wide :-

Only 5 % of churches have more than 350 members.

95 % of churches have less than 350 members.

50 % of churches have less than 75 members.

So if you have 76 members you are slightly above the world wide average

BABIES ARE BEAUTIFUL.

Everyone loves a little baby -their attractiveness is universal. Little babies are really cute, but if they do not develop in a manner commensurate with their age there is real cause for concern. Growth and development are indications of normal health and well being. If normal development is not evident at the appropriate time, investigation should be made into the reasons. There are several circumstances in which small is normal and legitimate :-

a) In an infant church during its early stages.

Every baby is small at birth. This is normal, acceptable, and understood. However, as the weeks and months go by there are usually many exciting indications of growth and development and it is precisely these signs that thrill the parents. If they are not evident there is cause for concern, and the longer this persists the greater the concern.

b) In villages or small communities.

It is obvious that a church in a village is probably not going to become a mega-church, particularly if that village is somewhat isolated and without transport facilities from surrounding areas. If the size of this church is compared with the population of the area, the percentage of the population attending even an apparently small church may be quite impressive.

c) In hostile environments.

Obviously there are some places where Church Growth is much harder to obtain due to the resistance and hostility of the local population. This may stem from political or religious prejudice. In such places even one convert won is almost priceless and even the smallest % growth rate is great cause for rejoicing and thanksgiving. I feel certain that the "Lord of the Harvest" takes great delight in seeing one soul won in this context.

d) In reproducing churches.

Where a church has chosen to reproduce itself and its membership is found in several smaller congregations rather than one large one.

However, there are some other exceptions to these observations, and circumstances in which a smaller congregation may be healthy and normal and perfectly biblical and legitimate.

GOD IS A GOD OF VARIETY.

The universe and all of nature reveal God's love of variety. Jesus spoke of His Father's love for the tiniest sparrow and in doing so reveals His love for those things which are small and sometimes despised by man. In the bold emphasis of Church Growth it is too easy to assume that there is necessarily something abnormal and tragic about a small church. I am sure that there are millions of "small churches" in which God takes great delight. Their numerical size may not be impressive, but their spiritual development may nevertheless be well pleasing to God. I am sure that there are some legitimate and acceptable reasons why some healthy churches have not experienced dramatic growth.

(But I also believe that many such churches can experience greater growth through making some minor adjustments.)

NOT ALL MINISTRIES ARE THE SAME.

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are various kinds of operations, but it is the same God that works in them all." (1 Cor. 12 : 4-6)

Since God has given various, different types of ministry gifts it is reasonable to assume that the operations and functions of these diverse giftings will produce a variety of results. Therefore let us not expect that every church will be alike, or the results and accomplishments the same. Nor lest us presume that one "result" is greater or better than another.

NOT ALL PEOPLE ARE THE SAME.

God has created an enormous variety in the human race. In all the world's vast population, no two people are exactly the same. This is not only true of their appearance but also of their character, nature, personality, and disposition. It is also true of their needs and aspirations. In order to meet this variety of human needs it seems feasible that a variety of ministries and various kinds of churches will be required.

NOT ALL CHURCHES ARE THE SAME.

This is obvious from reading the Epistles in the New Testament. The approach may be similar but the heart of the message differs in each case. Because the nature, and constituency of each church is different. The Epistles are applicable to all, but some of those letters were even more applicable to certain of the churches. The same principles holds true today and the fact is that the specific needs of some people are more appropriately and effectively met in the environment of a smaller church. There are particular features of a smaller church community which are more appropriate and conducive to meeting certain needs.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT CAN TAKE DIFFERENT FORMS.

Because a particular church does not have huge numbers of people attending, it does not necessarily mean that this church is sick or deformed. Its growth and vitality can be manifest in more ways than one. I have been privileged to visit and minister in numerous congregations which were not large numerically yet were making a vital contribution to their community and meeting many real needs.

SOME FEATURES AND ADVANTAGES OF A SMALLER CHURCH.

Personal Rather Than Impersonal.

In the larger church it is not always easy to maintain the personal touch. Sometimes the sheer weight of numbers attending a church can make the atmosphere somewhat impersonal. Certain types of people find this less than satisfying. Their particular nature needs the assurance and security of a closer knit group

A Family Atmosphere.

Some smaller fellowships, particularly where the pastor has a "father heart" for his people, develop a sense of *family* amongst the members which is not always easy to duplicate in the context of a large church.

Opportunities For Involvement.

It is sometimes felt that a smaller church needs voluntary helpers more than a large church does. Particularly a certain type of person who seems to function better in a smaller crowd. Some people find great fulfilment assisting in such situations, and certain people flourish in the situations which require this kind of assistance.

Some smaller churches find the fulfilment of their tasks more difficult because of

- Limited available personnel.
- Limited financial resources.
- Limited facilities.

As we look at some of these reasons, and examine the situation of our own church family, we need to make sure that they are *reasons*, and not *excuses*.

BASIC PRINCIPLES REMAIN CONSTANT.

Irrespective of the size of a church, some basic principles for the effective functioning of that church remain the same. To enjoy spiritual health and to fulfill the purpose and calling of God, every church needs :-

- a) Effective leadership.
- b) Edification of the Body.
- c) Evangelistic activities.

Every church needs a vision, a purpose for being, a clear sense of direction, and some criteria in order to know that the purpose is being fulfilled. That vision needs to be specific with defined goals and objectives. The church needs to know where it is heading and whether it is making progress towards its goal.

SOME VITAL INGREDIENTS TO MAKE SMALL CHURCHES GROW.

1. Life.

Jesus said, *"I am come that you might have LIFE, and that you might have it more abundantly."* (John. 10 :10.), but to look at some churches you would never realise it. Everything is neat and orderly, but it is as dead as the local cemetery.

The life of God is a most dynamic, powerful, and invigorating element. It is positively addictive. Once you have experienced it you cannot live without it. Once people feel and recognise it they will want to possess it in its fullness. Every church should determine, through prayer, faith, praise, and rejoicing, to experience the manifest presence of God and His life.

2. Truth.

Jesus said, *"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* Jn. 8 :32.

God's Truth is not a static, formal, lifeless commodity. It is vibrant, thrilling, and exciting. It is LIVING TRUTH, and Jesus is the embodiment of Truth. So when God's truth is a present reality in a church it does not introduce formalism, ritual and deadness. The opposite is true. His Truth is the most liberating, releasing, force in the world. Don't stifle that life. Don't bury it under loads of religious ceremony and ritual. Don't diminish it with conservatism. Let the living truth of God prevail and let His earthly church be radiant with it.

3. Purpose.

Too many people have decided that the church is irrelevant and purposeless. This is their persuasion after some cursory contact with it. The fact is that God's redemptive purposes, currently being worked out in His church, but soon to be manifest in the earth for all to see, is the most relevant and meaningful purpose on earth. Every church needs to thoroughly awaken to God's redemptive purpose and begin to pursue it with all their being. Once a church becomes vitally involved in the working through and fulfilment of God's Highest purpose, it is a cause which is irresistible.

4. Activity.

I am not referring to the activity of programs, and the endless activities of "playing church," but to the activities of God's life amongst His people. The dynamic activities of the Holy Spirit.

These activities can only be experienced when we allow the Holy Spirit to truly be in charge of His Church. They will bring healing, deliverance, release to the captives, and joy unspeakable and full of glory. Wherever there is healthy life, there is ACTIVITY.

5. Friendliness.

One of the features in which smaller churches can excel is that of friendliness. It is possible in a smallish group to foster a real sense of belonging. However this does not happen automatically simply because the group is small. It has to be fostered and sustained, because it is also true that small groups can easily become introvert and cliquish. This danger must be avoided at all cost.

6. Hope.

Hope is positive and optimistic expectation and this is something for which so many millions in our world are eagerly longing. The Kingdom of God is the only message which can offer this kind of hope. The Kingdom is both present, and yet to be revealed. Present in

the Kingdom realities which are potentially available in the church today. The righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (Rom. 14 :17.) Future, in that God's glorious earthly rule is soon to be established and "*the kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Messiah, and He shall reign forever and forever.*" (Rev. 11 :15.)

7. Atmosphere.

Atmosphere is a very important and critical aspect of an effective church. Yet it is extremely difficult to define or describe. I think if there is one thing which impresses new-comers above all else, it is the atmosphere which is experienced in the presence of God and His people. Even when we consider all the various elements that may constitute this special atmosphere, we still cannot fully explain what it is that impresses people so powerfully and so profoundly. There are undoubtedly numerous definable factors such as music, freedom, joy, praise and worship, yet beyond all this there is also something mystical, and it is the indefinable presence of God by the Holy Spirit. This atmosphere is something we should highly esteem and covet. It is a priceless thing of inestimable value.

CONCLUSION.

Having shared these comments about churches which may not, for some legitimate reasons, be experiencing healthy growth, let me conclude by emphasising that these cases should be the exception and not the rule.

The general principle is that whatever has life is meant to develop and grow. But this will not happen if the living entity is not healthy. In the case of a church it will not happen unless that church anticipates and reaches for that growth.

Development, growth, and expansion should be welcomed and sought after features of every church. However, unless the leadership encourages faith and expectancy for it, then it will not happen. Allow me to conclude by sharing a brief, effective strategy for growth.

1. DREAM GOD'S DREAM. Joel 2:28b

What is God's dream, His highest purpose for your church in these harvest days?

2. PLAN YOUR WORK

How will you achieve God's dream for your church?

3. WORK YOUR PLAN

No plan will ever be accomplished without work. Not the work of frenzied activities or programs but the productivity of people who are "labourers together with God" in the fulfilment of His plan and purpose.

4. RE-FOCUS

Every vision needs to be kept in focus. Circumstances and situations often change requiring us to focus afresh on our task. We need to periodically re-focus the vision and re-commit to the task. We frequently need to adjust our strategy, making necessary changes.

5. PERSIST

Real faith does not always accomplish its purpose immediately. It has factors of persistence and patience that keep going even in the face of delay, disappointment, and seeming impossibilities.

CONCLUSION:

Gal 6:9

*“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time **we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.***

(NIV)

